

# Commentary

VOLUME NINETY-FOUR • NUMBER SIX • DECEMBER 1992

## **Straight Talk About Gays**

**E. L. Pattullo**

## **My Uncle Yitzhak: A Memoir of I.B. Singer**

**Maurice Carr**

## **China on the Rise**

**Charles Horner**

## **On Reading for Pleasure Again**

**Norman Podhoretz**

## **Israel Watch**

**Edward N. Luttwak**

## **Moscow Gold**

**Eric Breindel**

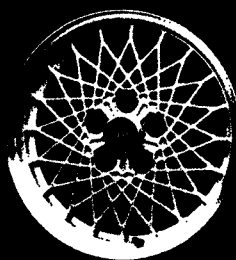
## **In Defense of Henry Kissinger**

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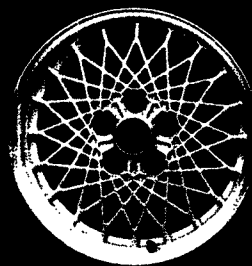


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# Commentary

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## Letters from Readers

### The High Cost of College

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his superb article, "The Scandal of College Tuition" [August], Thomas Sowell glides a bit too quickly over the effects of the federal student-loan program and other financial aid. Far from "mitigating" the impact of higher fees, I suggest that readily available student loans *cause* them.

How's that? Most people will agree that if a government runs amok in the seigniorage department and prints too much currency, it will spark inflation of the sort that results from "too many dollars chasing too few goods." In inaugurating the student-loan program, the government has printed a special sort of "money" that can only be used to buy a college education—and printed it in abundance.

A college hikes its tuition; if a student complains, he is told to get a loan, where once he may have been forced to go to a cheaper school—and that inability or unwillingness to pay more would have acted, *at the margin*, as a brake on the college's freedom to raise tuition. As a result, many students graduate with debts approximating a full year's starting salary or more.

And they do so more or less willingly: a college degree, even from East Overshoe U., has become a necessary ticket to the middle class that must be obtained, whatever the price. In the process, colleges have been freed from the discipline of the marketplace. And the iron law of unintended consequences has turned around and bitten the noble notion that lack of money should not prevent a person from getting a college education.

That is "demand-pull" inflation; Mr. Sowell deals mainly with the "cost-push" variety. An additional cost-driver can be found in the universities' mimicking professional sports teams and hiring at six-figure salaries the supposed superstars in such chi-chi specialties as literary deconstruction. Non-superstars of the desired sex, race, or sexual orientation also collect what amounts to a signing bonus as colleges bid up their salaries in the name of affirmative action. Of course, the hereditary *bracero* caste

in the Truck Gardens of Academe remains graduate students, who are doing more stoop labor for their profs than ever before, and whose scanty stipends would not raise anyone's tuition.

WARREN WETMORE  
Hazel Crest, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Congratulations to Thomas Sowell on his article. He shows that the amount of money spent on colleges equals the amount of money available. This does not mean that it is well spent, only that it is spent. This is an updated version of Parkinson's law, "The amount of time it takes to do a task equals the amount of time available." . . .

The law also applies to the medical industry. The amount of money spent on the medical industry (hospitals, doctors, drugs, etc.) equals the amount of money available. The medical industry is even more insatiable than the college Mafia (and a sick person tugs at our heartstrings far more than a student seeking a college education).

The only real solution is to get the government out of both businesses.

If student-guaranteed loans and other subsidies were ended, colleges would charge what families could afford. Motivated students without money have the option of staying at home, working, and going to school part-time. There is no law that says the nation owes them a college education, and certainly not an Ivy League education or its equivalent . . .

LAWRENCE BRISKIN  
Centerville, Ohio

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

How ironic it is that as American universities have become ever more Left-leaning over the past 25 years, the business practices of their administrators have come to resemble the worst excesses of the greedy, unregulated, rapier-sharp monopolistic capitalists whom they no doubt denounce at university-financed cocktail parties. It is also instructive to note that the greatest university fiscal excesses occurred during the "evil," "greed-is-good" Reagan-Bush era.

TOM GORDON  
North Wildwood, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Thomas Sowell makes several interesting points about the economics of university tuition. But he leaves off where the greatest challenge is encountered—how a university, or indeed any nonprofit institution, should measure and evaluate the ways it uses its resources.

The “products” generated by most nonprofit institutions are, at best, difficult to identify and quantify. Standardized tests measure only a small part of the impact of schools. Admissions statistics measure only one aspect of what museums give the public. And ticket revenues are a poor indication of the quality of an orchestra. . . .

Because it is difficult to measure impact, many nonprofit institutions fall into the trap of measuring effort instead. . . . Boards of trustees are told of dollars spent, people hired, and buildings built without reference to what those resources produce, or how that production fits with the overall mission of the organization. This is often a comfortable situation for management, since judging success based on resources expended virtually precludes the possibility of failure. But it results in . . . a lack of accountability by the institution for its performance—lack of accountability to its mission, to those who use and fund it, and to the community at large.

This, then, is the true challenge. Nonprofit institutions—colleges included—should be forced to develop ways of measuring performance. The institutions able to do this will stand out in their ability to deliver proven value and (one hopes) attract additional users (students, visitors, audience members, etc.) as well as the larger share of funding through grants and fees. These are the institutions that will be able to point to their work, demonstrate that it makes a difference, and be deserving of additional support.

DAVID E. BEHRMAN  
Larchmont, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Congratulations to Thomas Sowell on his exposé of the enormous financial waste and fraud in higher education. I wish Mr. Sowell had also discussed a related scandal, the apparent decline in productivity among many college faculties. Here in California, it is fairly common at public universities for

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## “Land for Peace”

### Can it solve the problems of the Middle East?

Many believe that the “land for peace” formula will solve the long-simmering problems of the Middle East. They think that peace would soon come to this troubled region if only Israel surrendered Judea/Samaria (the “West Bank”), Gaza and the Golan Heights to the Arabs.

### What are the facts?

**A totally new concept.** The concept of “land for peace” is a totally new one in the history of the world. It was formulated for one specific purpose only, namely to persuade and pressure Israel to give up territories that it has administered since the Six-Day War of 1967. By its victory in that war, Israel wound up in possession of these territories. Contrary to what many are led to believe, the “West Bank,” the focus of today’s attention, had never been part of any Arab country. It was part of Palestine, a territorial unit that, by the Mandate of the League of Nations and in line with the Balfour Declaration, had been designated as a national home for the Jewish people.

Thus, while the concept of “land for peace” is a brand-new one, the concept that to the victor belong the spoils is as old as history itself. Our own country, of course, following its Manifest Destiny, has benefited greatly and has consolidated its territory by applying this motto. But Israel followed a different path. From the day of victory in 1967, it waited for an offer of peace from the Arabs. But that offer never came. **Should be 2-way street.** In 1977, President Sadat of Egypt traveled to Jerusalem and presented a peace plan to the Israeli government. The Israelis eagerly embraced his suggestion. In exchange for peace and normalization of relations with its neighbor, Israel returned to Egypt the vast Sinai peninsula, together with the city of Yamit; some of the most advanced military installations in the

world; the port and naval installation of Sharm-el-Sheik, and the oil fields that Israel had developed. And, of course, Israel also gave up the natural buffer against aggression that the Suez Canal and the strategic depth of the Sinai itself provided. It was a first in history. Never before in the chronicle of mankind had the victor returned conquered territory to the vanquished in order to attain peace.

One would expect that the concept of “land for peace” would work both ways. After all, should not the Arabs also make some territorial sacrifices for peace? Unfortunately, that is not the case. Every inch of land held by the

“A new idea, perhaps even a good one...but it needs to work both ways to be valid and effective.”

Arabs is considered “holy Arab soil” and its possession by the “infidels” (Christians or Jews) is inadmissible. No

compromise, no concession is ever possible.

**Conflict is with Arab nations.** The “land for peace” formulation is now applied mostly to Judea and Samaria (the “West Bank”), the Gaza region and the Golan Heights. Israel’s foes, but also some of its friends, urge Israel to yield these regions to the Arabs, in exchange for “peace.” But no peace will come about by Israel’s giving up these areas of vital strategic importance to those who are its sworn enemies and who have declared over and over again that they wish to use these lands as their launching pad for the final attempt at the destruction of Israel. The conflict in the area is not only between Israel and the Palestinians. It is first of all between Israel and the Arab nations. With the single exception of Egypt, virtually all of them are still in a state of war with Israel.

To none of the Arab countries has the possibility ever occurred of *their* trading land for peace, for instance yielding the “West Bank”, Gaza and the Golan Heights to Israel for the sake of peace. There isn’t even a gesture of accommodation, such as a lifting of the Arab economic boycott against Israel, an apology for the odious slander that Zionism is Racism, or a discontinuation of the yearly charade in the United Nations, in which the Arab states attempt to expel Israel from that body. For the victor to yield land for peace to the vanquished is a new idea—who knows, it might even be a good one. But it surely would have to work both ways in order to be valid and effective.

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experienced professors to earn \$25,000-\$60,000 or more a year for teaching only two or three courses per semester. When asked to defend their paltry teaching work loads, all these professors are quick to cite their extensive "research" activities and the imperative to "publish or perish." However, in many instances a closer examination reveals that these activities have little or nothing to do with serious academic research but instead involve lucrative entrepreneurial activities like consulting, litigation support (i.e., "expert" court testimony), political advocacy, etc. I suggest that if these faculty members can devote substantial amounts of time to outside activities, they could certainly increase their teaching loads without a commensurate increase in pay (or student fees). Of course, as long as professors have a barely concealed contempt for teaching (especially undergraduate students) and an insatiable appetite for outside income, an increase in their work loads will never happen.

Finally, Mr. Sowell might have also mentioned the role of the media in perpetuating the scandal. Here in California our public universities are in a financial crisis and their representatives issue dire warnings every day about potential cutbacks in faculty and teaching programs if the taxpayers do not support budget increases. Yet the media—which spare no effort in analyzing "excessive" executive compensation in major U.S. corporations, administrative "waste" in privately-funded health-insurance plans, and cost "overruns" in the smallest military-weapons programs—rarely discuss the massive waste in our system of higher education.

GEORGE TREMONT  
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:  
... The more I read of Thomas Sowell's work, the more my respect and admiration for him grow. However, his excellent article leaves a potentially important question unanswered.

If, as Mr. Sowell argues, the colleges involved in the cartel system he describes are in effect collecting vast monopoly profits (although colleges are officially non-profit institutions, the notion that they behave in ways which maximize their economic welfare is implicit in Mr. Sowell's analysis),

standard microeconomics leads one to assume that other schools, as well as some of the cartel members themselves, will have an incentive to undercut the cartel prices in order to capture what should be very large gains for themselves. Why has this not happened?

Part of the answer may lie in the fact that the cartel members have great influence over the accreditation process for new colleges and can thereby prevent competitors from entering the market. However, this does not explain why those colleges which are already accredited do not break the rules in order to increase their profits, a process which has foiled numerous would-be cartels in other industries. Another possible explanation is that a college cannot easily increase its enrollment and thereby compensate for the lower tuition rates it would have to accept in order to break the cartel. But enrollment is not *completely* inflexible, and even if it were, schools might still want to undercut the cartel in order to increase the number of applicants, which would allow them to have a better student body, if not a bigger one.

As a student at Amherst College, an institution which participated in the cartel so cogently described by Mr. Sowell in his article, I have more than just an intellectual interest in resolving the question I have raised.

ILYA SOMIN  
Lexington, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:  
Thomas Sowell's interesting article on college tuition does not address two very important and interrelated aspects of this problem.

I think most people would agree that universities worthy of the name have two additional functions besides that of education: public service and research. Enlightened legislatures have for over 100 years supported the so-called land-grant colleges whose research and extension activities have made U.S. agricultural production the envy of the world. In medicine and physics, early benefits of research have also won generous federal, industrial, and philanthropic support. In other areas of research the immediate benefit is not as readily visible and often is very difficult to fund. Thus, university administrators have used tuition, which is a

big attention-getter, as a means of winning the support needed to run the other major activities of the institution.

The issue then becomes one of how to maintain a good university that fulfills all of its goals and objectives without raising tuition to unacceptable levels. At the present time there is no doubt that we are paying not just for tuition, but for the upkeep of excellence in research as well.

There are many excellent small liberal-arts colleges, not involved in research, which are forced to charge high tuition rates because they compete for good faculties with the research universities. In my opinion, faculties possessing a strong research background bring something to the classroom that is missing when such experience is lacking. . . .

HANS FISHER  
Highland Park, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:  
I found Thomas Sowell's article compelling in its logic. May I recommend that all parents send copies of it to their children's schools or to their alumni associations?

I completed my graduate degrees at Harvard University, receiving various discounts (known as grants) and teaching fellowships. Nonetheless, I still owed \$15,000 when I completed my doctoral program in 1986. . . .

While reading the article, I was reminded of a minor but offensive Harvard economic policy. Despite the heavy freight one pays to attend my alma mater, when a student goes swimming in a Harvard university pool, he or she must pay 50 cents for a towel. And who knows? The towel charge has probably gone up with the tuition increases.

Is this the appropriate time to note that Harvard is the largest holder of real estate in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts?

ELENA DEVOS  
Redondo Beach, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:  
The more publicity Thomas Sowell gives to the arrangements "competitive" colleges have made among themselves to reduce their own competition for students, the better. Instead of vying for the best students with scholarships, such colleges now offer a much larger portion of their student body financial aid, but in a form that can

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create particular dilemmas for large families.

Like the income-tax tables, the Financial Aid Form (FAF) underestimates the cost of raising children. For the 1992-93 school year, a family of four is allowed \$16,000 for maintenance; for every family member above six, you subtract \$2,500. (The only other deductions are for taxes, unusual medical expenses, non-college tuition, and \$2,500 or less for employment expenses for one parent.) Since this allowance is inadequate, the more children you have, the farther behind you get—the greater the discrepancy between your actual expenses and what the FAF allows you to subtract from the money you will be asked to contribute. Faced with such unrealistic calculations, many parents file fraudulent claims.

A more fundamental fault in the Ivy League's aid system is the assumption that all children in the family will go to similar colleges. These select colleges say, in effect, "sell all you have, borrow all you can, and when your resources are exhausted, our financial aid will kick in." Such a deal requires a considerable act of faith, for even if all goes as described, parents and students will be paying for college long after graduation.

But if there is more than one child, such a contract leads to a very unequal distribution of resources. If the younger children are not all such high fliers as the older ones, they will not be applying to such well-endowed institutions. The private colleges they choose may not have the resources to cover "100 percent of demonstrated financial need," so even though the family would now be eligible for considerable aid, smaller colleges might not be able to supply it. Then siblings have to drop a further notch down on the tuition scale, so that the cost of sending the first child to Harvard or Yale may be that everyone else goes to Ohio State.

One solution for ambitious students: forget the colleges in the Ivy Overlap group and apply instead to schools like Rice and the University of Chicago. They still give merit scholarships, enabling undergraduates to pay for their own education the old-fashioned way—by all that hard work in high school.

KATE BUCKLEY  
Westerville, Ohio

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is likely that the Ivy League universities have, over centuries, developed a special educational franchise by carefully selecting faculty and students alike. They "sell" not only education (most students enrolling at Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and the others, the *crème de la crème* of high-school graduates, could learn as much at less expensive state universities) but personal contacts and easy entry to high levels of business and government. As President Bush jokingly declared on receiving an honorary doctorate from Princeton, "I have the best of both worlds, a Princeton Ph.D. and a Yale education." The franchise has created such a demand for admission that of every seven applicants willing, only one is permitted actually to pay the high price in the form of the exorbitant annual tuition fees (less, of course, any applicable "discounts").

In all this, however, the Ivy League's position appears to be that of a well-established, unbreakable monopolist rather than a group of shady conspirators. . . . For if it were simply a conspiracy, . . . someone could make a bundle with a for-profit educational enterprise that would compete with Harvard, Yale, Princeton, *et al.* The undersigned would be happy to act as fund-raiser for such a venture, and among the Ivy League graduates (who else?) who manage some of the large Wall Street firms, there would undoubtedly be many ready to stand in line for the privilege of investing their own and their clients' money. Any takers?

TIBOR FABIAN  
Princeton, New Jersey

THOMAS SOWELL writes:

Warren Wetmore brings out an important point, which I do not however "glide over" in *Inside American Education*, from which my article was excerpted. Government formulas determining how much a given family can contribute financially to its student's college education, in order to determine how much federal help will be forthcoming, virtually guarantee that college tuition will be "unaffordable." Any college that kept its tuition affordable would forfeit millions of dollars in federal subsidies or in federally-guaranteed student loans from banks.

Lawrence Briskin makes the much more general point that gov-

ernment subsidies drive up the price of what they are subsidizing, whether that be higher education, medical care, or a thousand other things. When politicians say that they are going to make something "affordable," look for the price to skyrocket.

The recent antitrust verdict against MIT underscores Tom Gordon's point about the monopolistic practices of colleges and universities, even as they denounce business, Reagan, etc., for a "decade of greed." In reality, the 1980's were a decade of record levels of philanthropy, especially generous toward academia, which was escalating tuition at unprecedented rates. Judge Louis C. Bechtel rightly dismissed MIT's arguments as "pure sophistry." Perhaps this is a sign that more people may begin to scrutinize what goes on in academia with a clearer eye and a sharper skepticism about public-relations statements coming from ivy-covered buildings.

## The Israeli Elections

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his otherwise insightful autopsy of Likud's demise at the polls in June ["Why Likud Lost—And Who Won," August], David Bar-Illan underestimates the importance voters attached to Yitzhak Shamir's timid and indecisive economic policies. He admits those policies were not "all that they might have been"—specifically, that they did not move more rapidly to a free-market economy—but he argues that "the Israeli economy had made remarkable progress" under Shamir's premiership. Such an assertion misses the point.

Whatever progress Israel's economy made under Shamir was due to the fact that the country was moving incrementally ("inch-by-inch," the embassy in Washington likes to say) toward a system of lower taxes, fewer regulations, greater exposure to imports, and increased privatization. But "inch-by-inch" progress was not nearly good enough when a landslide of Soviet Jews poured into the country, overwhelming a behemoth bureaucracy ill-equipped for such cataclysmic change.

The key to successful absorption, then as now, is massive foreign investment. But while foreign aid and charity to Israel topped \$6 billion in 1991, direct foreign

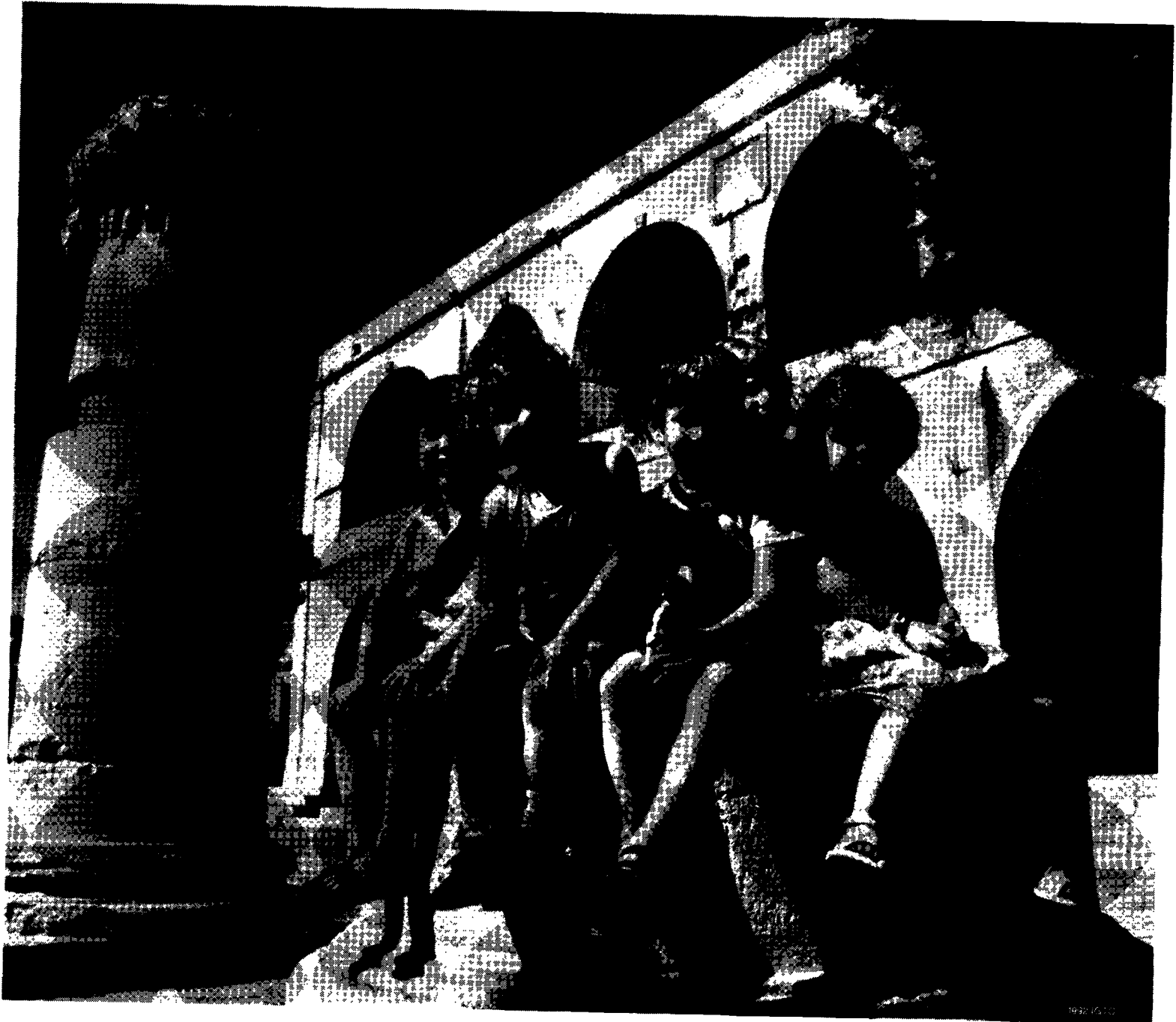
Commentary

# ISRAEL

Visitors to Israel never run out of things to see and do, so neither do our many notes they go. Here are a few suggestions for your next trip: some new attractions and others that have been around quite a while, but you may not have made it to. Have a great one.



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# Israel: Tips For Your Next Trip

## BIBLE LANDS MUSEUM

The civilization and culture of the ancient lands of the Bible

SITUATED BETWEEN THE Knesset and the Shrine of the Book, the new Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem houses a priceless collection of 3,000 pieces depicting the culture and civilization of the lands of the Bible—from Afghanistan in the east to the western Mediterranean, from the Caucasus Mountains in the north to Nubia in the south. The collection includes massive stone sarcophagi, engraved seals used



Phoenician plaque, 850-800 BCE

Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem

for recordkeeping, ivories, mosaics, and stelae, which are sculptured tablets or slabs of stone used for tombs or as records of public documents. Artifacts date from the Neolithic to the Byzantine period (6000 BCE to 600 CE). Much of the museum's collection was donated by its founders, Dr. Elie and Batya Borowski. Displays are arranged chronologically, with biblical quotations on the walls helping to connect the exhibits to the events and words of the Bible. In addition to galleries, the museum has a Hellenistic theater, a Roman court, a research library and a biblical garden. 25 Granot Street, Jerusalem.

## THE MUSEUM OF JAPANESE ART/TIKOTIN MUSEUM

At the top of Mount Carmel, the glories of Japanese art

IT'S THOUSANDS OF MILES from Tokyo or Kyoto, but Haifa has long been home to the Museum of Japanese Art and its masterworks. Included in the museum's collection are screens, scrolls, pottery and porcelain, netsuke, paintings, prints and flower arrangements; the 17th-19th century *ukiyo-e* prints of Edo are of particular note. The collection includes prints by artists such as Hokusai, Hiroshige, and Harunobuare. The museum's

galleries are divided by shoji, sliding doors made of wood and paper. Established in 1957 by Felix Tikotin, a Dutch antiques dealer, the museum also has a 2,500-volume reference library on the art and culture of Japan. Located at the top of Mount Carmel, the museum regularly changes its exhibits in keeping with the Japanese tradition of displaying beautiful objects that are in harmony with the seasons. 89 Hanassi Avenue, Mount Carmel, Haifa.



Woman with Servant, by Utamaro

Museum of Japanese Art/Tikotin Museum



In Jerusalem  
there's often  
as much to see  
below ground  
as there is  
above

Siebenberg House, Jerusalem

## SIEBENBERG HOUSE

A roof above, the history of Jerusalem below

YOU NEVER KNOW what you might find in your basement, especially if you live in a city like Jerusalem. When Theo and Miriam Siebenberg moved into a house in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City after the Six Day War, excavations in the area were turning up spectacular remains of Jerusalem's past, and the Siebenbergs decided to investigate what, if anything, lay under their house. The results of their two-decade subterranean exploration are impressive indeed (as well as controversial, in that the excavations were conducted without the supervision of trained archeologists). They include the remains of a second-century BCE mikveh, a fifth-century Byzantine cistern, and an ancient aqueduct. Also on display are artifacts of daily life like perfume jars, cooking

utensils, arrowheads and inkwells. Guided tours are conducted Sunday through Friday at noon. Siebenberg House, 7 Hagitit Street, Jewish Quarter, Old City, Jerusalem.

## DRUSE VILLAGES

An ancient culture lives on

A VISIT TO A DRUSE VILLAGE is the best way to experience the ancient culture of this religious sect founded in Egypt 1,000 years ago. Most of the world's 1.5 million Druse live in the Middle East; Israel's 100,000 Druse citizens live in 22 villages (13 of which are exclusively Druse) on Mount Carmel, in the Galilee and the Golan. Many aspects of the Druse faith are secret, and their scriptures have never been published. Druse villages are generally located on hilltops, with single-story flat-roofed houses clustered closely together. Most of the Druse are

farmers, with olives, tobacco, wheat and livestock their primary crops. Daliat el-Carmel is the largest Druse village in Israel; 97% of its population is Druse, and its shouk has many shops and restaurants that give visitors a flavor of Druse life. Another



Tea-time in a Druse village

Israel Ministry of Tourism

Israel Ministry of Tourism

village on Mount Carmel is 400-year-old Usfiyeh, where 80% of the residents are Druse. In 1930 the remains of a fifth-century Jewish settlement, including a synagogue, were unearthed in the village, along with 4,500 gold coins dating from the Jewish rebellion against Rome 1,900 years ago.

### BLOOMFIELD SCIENCE MUSEUM

A Jerusalem museum that *wants* its patrons to touch the exhibits

NEW THIS YEAR ON THE cultural scene in Jerusalem is the Bloomfield Science Museum, an indoor/outdoor museum suitable for children (and grown-ups) of all ages. The interactive, "hands-on" nature of the exhibits gives visitors a chance to experience the science and technology concepts on display. The museum's first exhibition: "a celebration of the world in motion—the physical laws that guide movement, the strange and wonderful behavior of moving things." The museum is located next to Hebrew University's Givat Ram campus.

### BET SHE'AN

Take a stroll through thousands of years of history

Bet She'an is one of the oldest and most important cities in the ancient Near East. Twenty layers of settlement, going back to the fifth-millennium BCE, have been uncovered, and it's all there for visitors to see and experience. Highlights include a Roman theater that seated 7,000 people; a Byzantine bath-house built on the foundation of an earlier Roman structure; a

semicircular Roman temple that probably served the cult of Dionysus, the main god of the city; a nymphaeum, an elaborate fountain dating to the second century; a Roman colonnade and a Byzantine street of shops; the remains of a basilica

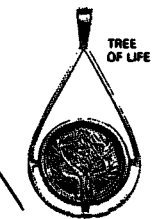
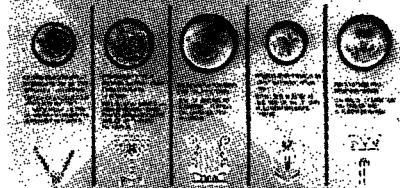
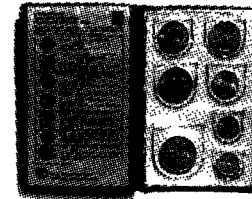
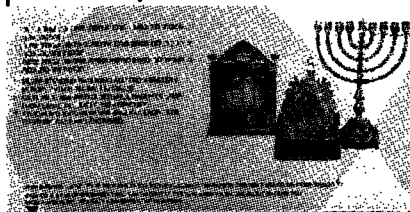
on which a mosque was built in the eighth century; and a Roman amphitheater where gladiators battled animals and each other before 6,000 spectators. Bet She'an is in the Galilee, about 25 miles south of Tiberias.

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north, to the coral reefs of Eilat in the south. Tours range from day trips to two-week excursions and are geared for walkers and hikers at all levels. Accommodations are at field centers, hostels, hotels, kibbutzim, or outdoors in sleeping bags. For information on SPNI's activities and its tour program contact

the American Friends of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel at 25 West 45 Street, New York, NY 10036; 212-398-6750.

## SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATURE

Out-and-about among the natural wonders of Israel

FOR ALMOST 40 YEARS the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel has been working to preserve the nation's landscapes, plant and animal life, and historical remains. SPNI has had many successes over the

years in modifying development projects that threatened environmentally sensitive regions. A network of 26 field centers serves as the base for SPNI's research activities and the non-profit organization's extensive program of nature tours which offer participants a chance to explore the natural wonders of Israel, from the basalt canyons of the Golan Heights in the

## THE ISRAEL MUSEUM

A gift of the modern

NEW AT THE ISRAEL Museum this year is a library of Surrealist and Dada books and documents donated by Italian art historian and collector Arturo Schwarz. The 2,000-plus items in the collection, which includes Dada and Surrealist publications, limited edition books and writings from many

## THE JEWELS OF THE CZARS

IN THEIR FIRST TRIP OUTSIDE Russia, the crown jewels of the czars will be on display at the Harry Oppenheimer Museum in Ramat Gan through January. (Many of the pieces in the exhibit have never been on display in Russia either, having been kept hidden for years within the walls of the Kremlin.) Over 300 pieces, including a number of Faberge eggs, will make the trip to Israel. Also on display will be an exhibit of Russia's mineral wealth, ranging from raw diamonds (including a 162-carat stone), rare colored gemstones, and nuggets of precious minerals such as gold, silver and platinum. While the exhibition is in Israel, the Russians will hold an auction and sale in Tel Aviv of exceptional pieces of jewel-

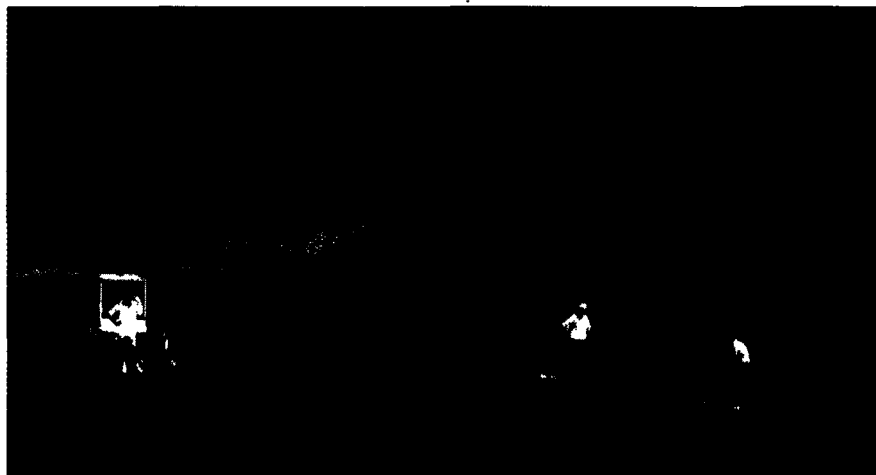
ry and gemstones. The exhibition was arranged by the leaders of the Israeli diamond industry and the Finance Ministry of the Russian Federation. The selection of Israel as the first foreign country to host the exhibit is seen as evidence of the improved state of relations between Russia and Israel. The Oppenheimer Museum, located in Ramat Gan's Israel Diamond Exchange complex, presents exhibits on all aspects of the Israeli diamond industry, from extraction to final polishing. Diamonds are big business in Israel: the industry currently employs almost 10,000 people and accounts for over \$1 billion of exports of polished gems each year. 1 Jaborinsky Street, Ramat Gan (just outside Tel Aviv).

of the movement's most prominent figures, represent one of the largest gifts in the museum's 27-year history. Schwarz, who was born in Egypt and moved to Italy, his mother's native country, after Israel's independence, began assembling these works almost 50 years ago. The collection will be housed in the Nathan Cummings 20th Century Art Building, which opened two years ago in conjunction with the Museum's 25th anniversary celebration. The 48,000-square-foot structure is home to much of the museum's collection of modern and contemporary painting, sculpture, photography, prints and drawings, including works by Henri Matisse, Marc Chagall, George Segal, Robert Rauschenberg and Saul Steinberg. The museum's Billy Rose Sculpture Garden (shown on the cover of this section) features over 50 modern sculptures including works by Pablo Picasso, Auguste Rodin, Henri Matisse, Robert Indiana and prominent Israeli sculptors. Designed by Isamu Noguchi, the sculpture garden consists of a series of terraces surrounded by stone walls. Many of the Garden's pieces were donated by American showman Billy Rose. The Israel Museum, Ruppin Boulevard, Jerusalem.

### GOLF IN CAESAREA

A second-century fairway

Playing golf in Israel is very different from the experience in America: on even the best course in Westchester, you wouldn't have the chance to putt amidst Roman and Crusader ruins as you do in Caesarea. The 18-hole course at the Cae-



The greens of Caesarea

sarea Golf & Country Club is open seven days a week and tourists are always welcome. Caesarea itself, halfway between Tel Aviv and Haifa, is home to fabulous ruins from Israel's past, including Roman temples, an aqueduct, and a theater that has been reconstructed

and is now used for open-air concerts. Hotels and resorts in the area offer a variety of activities besides golf, including tennis, horseback riding and water sports of all kinds on the Bay of Caesarea. The Caesarea Golf & Country Club, P.O. Box 1010 Caesarea 30660. ●

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investment was a meager \$300 million. As a result, big businesses eager to expand, and small businesses ready to launch, were starved for capital. True to form, however, Shamir resisted sweeping structural reforms that would attract more investment and instead groped for still more aid and charity.

Yitzhak Rabin apparently understood the growing frustration among Israelis over the economy and the failure of the Shamir government to move more decisively on reform. What else explains the historically socialist-oriented Labor party blasting Likud in newspaper campaign ads with such messages as "Labor holds that growth and investment can only be achieved by reducing government involvement in the economy and by shaking off the Likud's rigid bureaucratic control of the economy"?

Rabin's approach to the economy—which I call "Rabinomics"—actually echoes Reaganomics, at least rhetorically. It calls for lower taxes, lower tariffs, more rapid privatization, deregulation, an emphasis on small-business creation, and a "war on unemployment." Ten years ago such an approach would have been unthinkable for a Labor leader. Now it is part and parcel of a winning ticket.

The question is: is Rabin really serious? And if so, can he fend off all the socialists he has welcomed into his government and who still dominate his party? "A free world demands a free economy," Rabin said in his inaugural address. Truer words have never been spoken. Washington will now be watching with anticipation for action.

JOEL C. ROSENBERG  
Heritage Foundation  
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I believe David Bar-Illan is basically correct that the 1992 Israeli election results had very little to do with any dramatic ideological shift in Israel, Western media serendipity notwithstanding. . . . The strength of most of the ideological blocs remained almost completely unchanged, with a five-seat shift (out of the Knesset's 120) from Likud to Labor . . . accounting for the change in the governing coalition, hardly a cultural revolution. . . . In my opinion, the shift was no more and no less than a vote on

governing competence and leadership. Likud was widely viewed as bumbling, and lacking "the vision thing," to borrow from the Americans. . . .

I think Mr. Bar-Illan is far too generous in dispensing absolution to Likud for its economic performance; any real progress that existed behind all the statistics was attributable less to Likud than to the genius of the Israeli entrepreneur in surviving in the face of anti-productive government policies. This said, however, it must be said, too, that there are many economic grounds for fearing the return of the Laborites. . . .

But the economic epitaph for the Likud era must still be: Far too little, far too late.

STEVEN E. PLAUT  
University of Haifa  
Haifa, Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

David Bar-Illan has correctly identified many of the reasons Likud lost. However, I think he has underestimated the degree to which even strong Likud supporters believed that the party was in serious disarray after fifteen years in office. . . . At the same time, Labor cleverly disguised its overwhelmingly dovish position by choosing Rabin—who is probably the farthest to the Right of any of Labor's leaders—to run for Prime Minister. . . .

Given the disarray of Likud and the cleverness of Labor, what is surprising is how *few* seats moved from the Right to the Left. . . . One of the most important aspects of the election is buried in a footnote in which Mr. Bar-Illan states that "a majority of the [Jewish] electorate voted for the Right-of-Center parties." . . . This gives the lie to those who claim that the Israeli public has shifted positions decisively on the question of the territories. It is more accurate to say that the shift was extremely small, considering the other factors involved in the election. And it is clear that a majority of Jewish voters still oppose territorial compromise, at least until the Arabs demonstrate that they really want peace.

BRUCE J. TERRIS  
Jerusalem, Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

David Bar-Illan notes that if Likud had won just two more seats, the right-wing-religious bloc would

have had "a majority of 61 [seats in the Knesset], and Shamir would now be heading the government." The irony is that Likud and its allies actually *did* win enough votes for 61 or 62 seats—but because of a quirk in Israel's election laws, more than 65,000 votes that were cast for right-wing parties were discarded. . . .

Israeli law arbitrarily decrees that a party must receive 1.5 percent of the total vote in order to qualify for the Knesset; if a party fails to cross that 1.5-percent threshold, all of its votes are thrown out. Four right-wing parties failed to pass the threshold, and all their votes . . . were disqualified. In terms of pure democracy, Likud and its allies really did win. Only the peculiarities of the Israeli electoral system rescued the Israeli Left from its fifth straight defeat at the polls.

HERBERT ZWEIBON  
Chairman, Americans for a  
Safe Israel  
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . There are many plausible explanations for what happened in the Israeli elections, including . . . , among other things, the fact that Likud and Shamir had alienated the United States, Israel's prime ally. Israel could ill afford to continue having at the head of its government a man so utterly disliked by the American President and his Secretary of State. Nor could it risk losing support among American Jews, badly shaken by the American-Israeli rift. . . .

By contrast, Labor managed quite cleverly. For one thing, it changed its image so that socialism became a dirty word never to be heard during the campaign. The dovish Shimon Peres was replaced as party leader by the hawkish Rabin, and voters were reminded of the quality of the latter's leadership during the 1967 war and his strong performance during the early stages of the *intifada*. . . .

At this juncture, it remains to be seen whether Rabin will rise to the demands of change without endangering the vital interests of the country, and whether he will be able to distance himself from the extremists within the Labor party and among the allies in the coalition. . . .

SAMUEL L. TENNENBAUM  
West Orange, New Jersey

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## TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

One observation in David Bar-Illan's excellent analysis of Likud's electoral defeat . . . struck a particular chord with me. I refer to Mr. Bar-Illan's remarks about Israel's tactic of using undercover army units to deal with the latest stage of the *intifada*—armed gunmen who torture and kill fellow Arabs accused of collaborating with the Israelis. The figures he cites—that the work of the undercover units led to 1,500 arrests and 20 killings of violent suspects—put this new tactic into some sort of perspective.

By contrast, the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* made use of anecdotal accounts to imply that these military undercover squads were *killing* most of their targets. Neither of these prestigious newspapers devoted more than a paragraph to Israeli claims that the undercover teams were arresting—not killing—the suspects they pursued. . . .

Additionally, neither newspaper report even mentioned the likely benefactors of the Israeli actions: other Arabs who might have been victims of the gunmen. The message of both the *Post* and the *Times* was that Israel now sends soldiers to kill innocent Arabs.

Thank you, Mr. Bar-Illan, for telling us the whole truth.

DAVID GERSTMAN  
Baltimore, Maryland

## TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . David Bar-Illan . . . tells us that one key reason Yitzhak Shamir was unable to win reelection was his "egregious domestic compromises," such as "[giving in] to the ultra-religious parties (the *haredim*) [who made] outrageous demands for subsidies" and

coddling non-Zionist parties whose followers did not serve in the army and whose Knesset members—some of whom are under police investigation—were unabashedly extorting taxpayers' money for their projects and institutions.

And Mr. Bar-Illan suggests approvingly that the Tsomet party quadrupled its Knesset representation mainly because it was "the only Right-of-Center party to attack *haredim*."

If we replace the terms "ultra-religious" and "*haredim*" with the more neutral phrase "people who practice the traditional Jewish way of life," we must wonder why a sig-

nificant number of Israeli voters—and apparently also Mr. Bar-Illan—feel no embarrassment at the use of typically anti-Semitic distortions and negative characterizations of political behavior that is in fact accepted as perfectly normal when practiced by other people.

Why, for example, is it considered extortionate to use the normal Israeli political process to seek modest allocations of money for "projects and institutions" that meet the particular educational and social needs of religious Jews, many with extremely low incomes, but unremarkable when far more extravagant demands are made by other parties?

Why is an inconclusive and unduly extended police investigation of a particular individual used to insinuate that an entire group is guilty?

Why is it implied that because Israeli law grants draft deferments to full-time yeshiva students (like divinity students in America even during wartime), it follows that no *haredim* serve in the army?

Is it possible that the true crime that puts the *haredim* beyond the pale of Mr. Bar-Illan's universe of reasonable civil discourse is not their actual behavior but rather their refusal to accept the idea that Zionism has superseded Judaism? If that is the case, he has demonstrated that the protean force of anti-Semitism, which so often appears today in the guise of anti-Zionism, can also garb itself as Zionism.

JEFFREY MARSH  
Baltimore, Maryland

## TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his account of the Israeli election, David Bar-Illan is a model sore loser. His article is bad-tempered (Labor/Meretz succeeded because of the lies they told); patronizing (Israeli voters didn't understand how good they had it under Likud); self-serving (it was Likud that made Rabin a credible candidate, and anyway his victory was just a matter of inches). Well, perhaps. But at least contradictions, one might think, can be nonideological. For example, the "land-for-peace" formula, Mr. Bar-Illan contends, is viewed as suicidal by most Israelis, although half of them (or a bit less than half, he quickly amends) favor "territorial compromise." Is he suggesting then that "territorial compromise" does *not* mean land for peace?

What else could it mean? And how many halves make up this whole? Mr. Bar-Illan's notion that the principle of "land for peace" entails a commitment to pre-1967 boundaries is a pure fiction—linguistically, conceptually, politically. . . .

BEREL LANG  
West Hartford, Connecticut

## DAVID BAR-ILLAN writes:

I have no argument with Joel C. Rosenberg's critique of Yitzhak Shamir's economic policies. That he "resisted sweeping structural reforms" is undeniable. Nor can I dispute Steven E. Plaut's contention that "progress . . . was attributable less to Likud than to the genius of the Israeli entrepreneur." And it is true, too, that Rabin's free-market approach to the economy during the campaign—which contradicted all traditional Labor positions—reassured voters almost as much as his reputation for security consciousness. Yet voters do not usually change leadership when their own economic condition is better than ever. Why the Israeli voters did so is what I tried to examine.

I obviously could not touch on all the causes of Israel's political "upheaval," and I am grateful to Bruce J. Terris, Herbert Zweibon, and Samuel L. Tennenbaum, as well as to Messrs. Rosenberg and Plaut, for pointing to additional possibilities. I also appreciate David Gerstman's point on the media's misrepresentation of the Israeli army's undercover units.

Jeffrey Marsh is not alone in describing *haredi* parties as representatives of just another constituency whose conduct is no worse than others'. Nor is his suggestion unusual that they are singled out for calumny—which he deems anti-Semitic—only because they refuse to accept that "Zionism has superseded Judaism." Both Likud (in the past) and Labor (now) have, officially if not privately, justified concessions to *haredi* parties with similar rationalizations.

But having enthusiastically and publicly welcomed *haredi* participation in government in the hope that power would beget responsibility, I must vehemently disagree. The *haredi* parties' years in power have been distinguished not by conciliation but by polarization. Not because their religious orthodoxy is objectionable or their avid pursuit of parochial interests ex-

ceptional, but simply because *haredim* do not serve in the army in a country whose survival depends on the military.

To state that those who do not serve are full-time yeshiva students, who, like divinity students in the United States, should be exempt, is to mock the truth. Surely Mr. Marsh must know that not all military-age *haredim* are "full-time" yeshiva students. And he must also know that there are equally observant followers of the National Religious party who are yeshiva students and who serve valiantly. There is nothing in Judaism, with or without Zionism, which makes piety and patriotism incompatible. What makes *haredi* demands extortionate is that they include a stipulation which in effect exempts tens of thousands of able-bodied Israeli Jews from all national service.

I do not quite understand why my effort to explain how a mostly successful government lost the election struck Berel Lang as the lament of a sore loser. But the one example he cites to prove his point betrays a misunderstanding of Middle East codes. "Territorial compromise" may logically and linguistically mean "land for peace." But in the prevailing diplomatic parlance the former means Israeli withdrawal from *some* territory and the latter a complete withdrawal to the 1967 lines. This is why the Bush administration and the Arabs talk of "land for peace" and the Labor government insists it is ready only for "territorial compromise." How successfully Rabin will be able to maintain the distinction only time will tell.

### Lot's Wife

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Reading Rebecca Goldstein's remarkable article, "Looking Back at Lot's Wife" [September], made me reach immediately for the Bible. There had to be something in the passage about this tragic metamorphosis I had missed previously. But there it was, one stark, emotionless sentence. She turned, . . . and she was history. No regret for a life snuffed out in a callous moment. Even though Lot and his family had been forewarned not to look back or else (so the wife knew what she was doing and had it coming to her), the punishment strikes one as excessive, hardly fitting the

crime. To any fair-minded human being, this must seem like an act of gross injustice—if one ever stopped to think about it. But is not justness one of the attributes of God? Is not the Hebrew God described throughout the Bible as a just and merciful God, attributes that lift Him above all others who are worshipped as gods? Yet most of us are immediately willing to blame the woman who disobeyed a specific command, although it is not clear what her crime actually was, rather than assuming that God could be unfair.

Through her moving personal account of a lifelong search for an explanation of this paradox, Mrs. Goldstein ultimately arrives at an answer that not only gives Lot's wife a plausible motive for her transgression, but also rehabilitates the tainted image of God. The conclusion, so simply stated—in three words—with one stroke confirms that He is a God of mercy after all and He understands the anguish of a mother's heart.

I had never lingered much over the story of Lot's wife. In fact, before reading Mrs. Goldstein's article, I never even considered it a story. What kind of story consists of only one sentence? . . . Now my understanding of human motivation has been immeasurably enriched.

More remarkable still is that the conclusion did not come to the author overnight. . . . It came as the result of a long personal development (the essay almost amounts to an intellectual *Bildungsroman*). Along the way we meet the terror-stricken child, who was fortunate to have the comfort of a wonderfully human and learned father who shared her puzzlement, then the young woman rebelling against conventional, pat answers, . . . and finally the mature woman who returns, reconciled, but not acquiescent, her sense of fairness restored.

Mrs. Goldstein manages to fill these few pages with so much profound reflection on the meaning of human existence, one would have to write an essay of almost equal length to do it justice. Her comparison of the dense human texture of biblical narrative and the more abstract life of the mind as represented in the canon of Western philosophy . . . calls to mind Erich Auerbach's wrenching analysis of the biblical style, as exemplified in the exchange be-

tween Abraham and God on Mt. Moriah, versus the Homeric style, exemplified in the description of Odysseus' homecoming in *The Odyssey*.

Rebecca Goldstein not only confirms God's fairness, she also restores the good name (in fact, she *finds* her name, which is never mentioned in the Bible . . .) of a woman who has been the butt of derision for millennia.

BRIGITTE M. GOLDSTEIN  
Highland Park, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

There is more to the midrash quoted by Rebecca Goldstein than she relates. . . . The midrash is noted by the medieval commentator Nachmanides, who cites as its source the midrashic compilation, *Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer* (Chapter 25). The midrash (as given in Nachmanides) states that Lot and his wife were told not to look back because the *Shekhinah* (the divine Presence) would descend to rain sulfur and fire upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah. Thus, according to the midrash, they were given a reason not to look, namely, so as not to behold the *Shekhinah*. This is in line with Exodus 33:20: "And He said: 'Thou canst not see My face, for man shall not see Me and live.'"

According to the midrash, when Irit (or Idit), the wife of Lot, looked back to see if her two daughters were following her, she beheld the back of the *Shekhinah* and became a pillar of salt. Thus it would appear from the midrash that it was not the act of looking back but the beholding of the *Shekhinah* that was the cause of her death. As for the particular form of her demise, turning to salt, according to the 11th-century commentator Rashi, it was measure for measure, because she had sinned through salt. When her husband once told her to give a little salt to some guests, she berated him for wanting to introduce a bad custom into their city.

Rashi gives a different explanation from the midrash as to why Lot and his wife were told not to look back:

You sinned with them but are saved through the merit of Abraham. It is not fitting that you should witness their doom while you yourself are escaping.

SINCLAIR KOSOFF  
Chicago, Illinois

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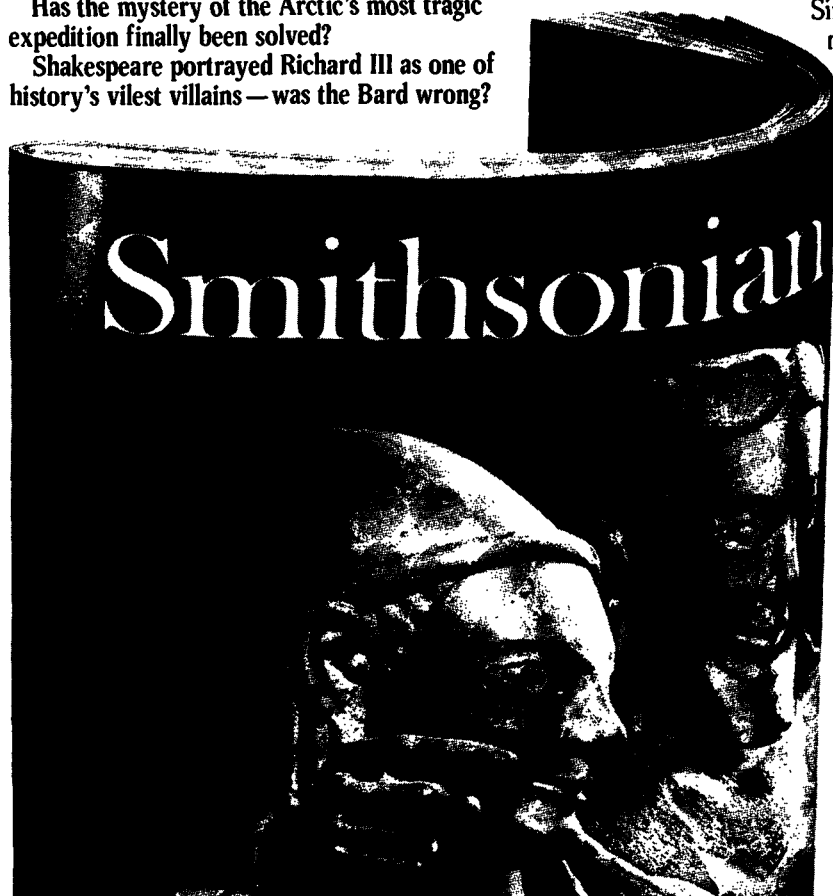
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**TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:**

The story of Lot's wife changed to salt may have an explanation not suggested by Rebecca Goldstein in her essay.

Hers was a dilemma, all right—a dilemma, if I understand the term, being that which offers no *best* way out, for whichever way we turn to find the open door we walk into a wall. Still, one wall may be softer than another.

It is perhaps comforting to think that Lot's wife looked back because she loved her daughters, and wanted to know what had become of them in Sodom. She knew she wouldn't get away with looking and she didn't.

No one admires blind obedience, yet had Lot's wife obeyed and not looked back, she would have survived. Without her daughters, true, but survived. The injunction not to look was an injunction to save herself—to sacrifice and yet to save.

I thought of this story when I rediscovered another story, "This Way for the Gas," by Tadeusz Borowski [COMMENTARY, July 1962]. There we find a woman who ignores the desperate cries of her child so that she might escape the direct route to the ovens. She will not recognize her child—she will not look back. In this grim story it does her no good, she is in a Godless zone; even if she had succeeded in separating herself from her child, she would have survived for only a very short time.

We feel great pity for the woman in Borowski's story, determined against love to save herself when that is all that could possibly be saved, even briefly. . . .

THOMAS PUTNAM  
Buffalo, New York

**TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:**

. . . I enjoyed Rebecca Goldstein's article very much. It is full of warmth, affection, and the personal touch. But while the author emphasizes the human aspects of the story, I wish to add what, in my opinion, is its overall significance.

The story of Lot's wife is about personal choices, free will, and the human fascination with death and destruction. God can only warn us of outcomes, but cannot force upon us choices. At the same time, God does not pass judgment. People do not get punished for their choices, they merely face the consequences of those choices.

Lot's wife chooses to look back.

She is not punished for it, but rather suffers the inevitable consequence. After all, she could have chosen to look forward toward life and could have stayed with her two daughters who survived. Although she knew that those who stayed behind had perished (and maybe even because of it), she chose to identify with them and therefore encountered a similar fate.

DAVID HOFFMAN  
Rego Park, New York

**TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:**

Yet another interpretation must be added to those Rebecca Goldstein recounts. This midrash . . . holds that Lot's wife was told not to look back at the destruction of Sodom, for such a backward glance would cause her to be inundated by her own saline tears of grief, turning her into a pillar of salt.

This explanation immediately struck a responsive chord in my professor, Egon Lewin, of blessed memory. . . . A lone survivor of the Holocaust in his family, he accepted this new interpretation . . . and forthwith connected it to the chain of tradition.

RUTH BIRNBAUM  
University of Massachusetts  
Amherst, Massachusetts

**TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:**

After reading Rebecca Goldstein's "Looking Back at Lot's Wife," I resolved the problem of Lot and Irit (incidentally, I am grateful to have Lot's wife's name). The following is my own midrash:

Lot and Irit: A Turnaround

And Lot looked back  
And he beheld his wife  
Precious  
As a Pillar of Salt.

JON EISENSEN

Stanford University  
Stanford, California

**REBECCA GOLDSTEIN writes:**

I am grateful that my very personal thoughts on the story of Lot's wife provoked some very personal responses, and I want to thank all those who took the trouble to write to me, either through COMMENTARY or directly. As Brigitte M. Goldstein points out (and it is my special prayer for all writers that they too find such a large-minded and large-hearted reader), the Bible itself supplies only the few stark facts, leaving wide open the question of the manner of woman that

Irit was, the nature of the desire that preceded her moment of devastation. Sinclair Kossoff, in providing the remainder of the midrash that I had only partially quoted, intensifies the mystery of her motivation. If she had some idea of why she shouldn't look back, and what would happen to her if she did, why did she do it?

It is interesting to me that the remainder of the responses do not view Irit in the harsh light of retribution. Both Thomas Putnam and David Hoffman make the case, I think, that Irit's fate, though determined by God, was not a punishment from Him. Ruth Birnbaum's letter places the fate of this woman in the most moving context possible.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge Jon Eisen's poetic midrash by sharing with him, and others, a fragment of Anna Akhmatova's beautiful poem, "Lot's Wife," translated here by Judith Hemschmeyer:

Who will weep for this woman?  
Isn't her death the least significant?  
But my heart will never forget the one  
Who gave her life for a single glance.

**American Democracy****TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:**

I share Joshua Muravchik's perception that world history is at a crossroads ["Losing the Peace," July], but question the relative importance of foreign aid in determining which way it will go. Perhaps democracy abroad would be better served in the long run if we turned inward to tackle the grave problems of American democracy, which are the real, ultimate threat to global democratization.

From the beginning, the entire world march to democracy was based on the perception that, in the words of James Baker, "freedom works" whereas authoritarianism does not. Foreigners everywhere look upon our prosperity as confirmation of this. But our "prosperity" is illusory and our democracy has not been working well. Mr. Muravchik's assertion that our standard of living is two-and-a-half times what it was in 1948 ignores the vast accumulation of debt at all levels. How prosperous would the U.S. be if the \$4-trillion national debt had to be paid now, in addition to private debt?

Democracy, the supposed victor in today's world, has proven chronically incapable of imposing the sacrifices essential to solving our problems. Mr. Muravchik asks if we should go on borrowing or reduce the deficit by raising taxes or cutting spending. To continue borrowing at current rates is the fast track to economic ruin, yet politicians in our democracy generally cannot win elections by raising taxes or cutting popular spending programs. So we continue to career toward bankruptcy. . . .

The columnist Charles Krauthammer recently found it peculiar that America's mood was so glum despite the collapse of Communism. Why aren't Americans dancing in the streets now that a great totalitarian rival has fallen? Perhaps it is because America's own problems are so potentially catastrophic. . . . Krauthammer notes that our deficits imperil our superpower status. I agree; looming bankruptcy threatens vastly to diminish American power. . . . American democracy can hardly be a permanent model for the world if it cannot be made to work in the U.S. itself.

. . . The specter of U.S. economic collapse is probably a graver threat to Russian democratization than any internal factor. It seems that no matter how severe the economic plight, no matter how grave the chaos in neighboring republics, the Russian people steadfastly reject a return to dictatorship. They stoically endure the hardships of a transition because they feel American-style democracy and capitalism are the key to prosperity. As long as the Russian people continue to believe in democracy, it is hard to see how a new coup will succeed, particularly without the old state-security apparatus. But the chronic failings of American democracy may undermine that belief if they are not corrected soon.

TIM DONOVAN  
Manchester, Connecticut

JOSHUA MURAVCHIK writes:

I agree with many of the points made by Tim Donovan, but I believe he presents them in a way that is out of proportion. His sanguine view of the future of Russian democracy comports oddly with his extreme anxiety about American democracy. Does the record of the past count for nothing? The American people's unwillingness to reconcile the level of benefits

they demand from government with the amount of revenue they are willing to fork over has become a shameful episode in our history. But I am confident that once the American people see how harmful this has become, they will accept the burdens of rectifying it.

## PBS

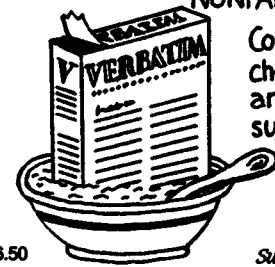
TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Andrea Levin's article, "PBS Does It Again" [July], is generally part of the conservative attack on federal funding for the Public Broadcasting Service. More specifically, it is an attack on "Perspectives on Peace: The Middle East," my educational project on Middle East peacemakers, which includes a documentary film, *The Struggle for Peace: Israelis and Palestinians*, a book of the same name, a study guide, and a videoconference, *Prospects for Peace*. My project cannot be used as ammunition for an attack on PBS, however, since it was not originated by or for PBS. Thus, it was not PBS which began "an ambitious . . . venture, 'Perspectives on Peace,'" as Mrs. Levin writes. I did, in cooperation with an advisory board of academics and public figures on both sides whose help I enlisted. Nor was this project a "propaganda piece" for anyone. The project was designed to encourage public discussion of one of the longest and most painful of all world conflicts—that between Israelis and Palestinians. Its focus is *not* on the bitter history of the conflict, but on the situation today, on peacemakers, ordinary Israelis and Palestinians who are working against great odds to help resolve the conflict.

Mrs. Levin apparently did not read the film credits. I produced the film; Steve Talley directed it; we wrote it together. The film crew was American, Israeli, Palestinian, and British. I am proud to have worked with so many talented and dedicated people during the three years of the project's making.

PBS did *not* fund the project or pay for it. Mrs. Levin also implies that the film was "underwritten" by the Arabian American Oil Company. The ARAMCO Services Company, a Houston-based American company, did donate \$2,000, less than 1 percent (as the credits indicate) of the total budget for the project, which was funded largely by the MacArthur Foundation and the Ford Foundation, with smaller

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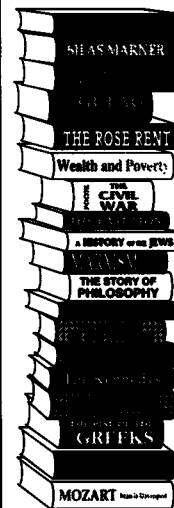
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contributions from the Greenville Foundation, the James T. Dougherty, Jr. Foundation, and the Trull Foundation. As Mrs. Levin notes, the Middle East Institute's United States Outreach Fund gave \$23,000 for the publication and distribution of the study guide; this so-called "quasi-academic, pro-Arab group" also gave \$10,000 to Americans for Peace Now (Israel). (It might be interesting if the rules for public disclosure of funding were as stringent for Andrea Levin's group, CAMERA, as they are for public-television underwriting.)

Mrs. Levin could easily have checked her facts about the project's participants, but failed to do so. For instance, Joel Beinin is not an "Israeli revisionist historian," but an American professor of history at Stanford University. His essay in the study guide is an overview of revisionist history as practiced within Israel by Israeli historians.

An assault on my earlier film about women in a Palestinian refugee camp, *Women Under Siege* (1982, not 1983), was orchestrated by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith [ADL], which sent 20,000 news releases across the country, attacking me as a PLO propagandist. For a 28-minute film never seen on American television, this seemed an overreaction, to say the least. William J. Bennett, then the head of the National Endowment for the Humanities, did indeed term the work "a political tract"; he had leveled the same charge at someone else's film about Nicaragua—which was also about women. Several dozen national and academic leaders wrote to Bennett, contesting his charges. After the ADL attack came anonymous phone calls with threats to fire-bomb my home, because I "liked Arabs." I hope this will not happen again.

Mrs. Levin argues that the Palestinian peacemakers in the film are not "representative" because they are not Muslims but members of a Christian minority. Why does this matter? And of the nine Palestinians interviewed on screen and named, three were Muslims, so her allegation also seems egregious.

"Representativeness" is a problem Mrs. Levin also raises with regard to the Israelis in the film. Contrary to her allegation, many Israelis have been working for peace for years, and the groups

featured are still active (Women in Black, Yesh Gvul, Peace Now). These are only three of 78 peace groups registered in Israel. . . .

The project itself defined the people interviewed. Since the focus is on ordinary people, there are purposely no government officials in the film, no mainstream political figures on either side. There is a final scene of a dialogue group where Israelis and Palestinians talk together about their deepest fears: Israelis' fear of collective annihilation, because of their tragic history; Palestinians' fear of continued oppression, because of their more recent experiences.

Just as there are few mentions of Arab massacres of Jews in the study guide, there are also few mentions of Jewish massacres of Arabs. Again the focus of the project is on the situation now, and on prospects for the future. My agenda, which Andrea Levin finds subversive, was indeed "to give a mass American television audience images of people with whom they can identify." In this way I hoped to help break the stereotyped American media images of both Israelis and Palestinians as victims, or terrorists, or both, involved in a never-ending tribal struggle. . . .

I close by reminding Andrea Levin of our long and, I thought, constructive telephone conversations last spring. I asked her what she objected to most in the film, which at that time had already aired on several PBS stations. "Compromise," she said. Compromise? Apparently the film's greatest sin is its suggestion to the American audience that compromise on both sides is necessary to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. What are the implications of no compromise? Forty more years of bloodshed and political instability for all peoples in the region? I refuse to believe that Andrea Levin (or the editors and readers of COMMENTARY) would support such a future status quo. Surely, like most people, she and they are for peace with security and justice. That, of course, is the bias of my project.

ELIZABETH W. FERNEA  
University of Texas  
Austin, Texas

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:  
. . . It saddened me to read in your "Israel Watch" section Andrea Levin's tendentious article on the

PBS documentary, *The Struggle for Peace: Israelis and Palestinians*. In charging that it features "interviews with a wholly unrepresentative set of Israelis and Palestinians," she utterly misses the point of the film, which is to publicize the common denominators and shared concerns of peace activists on both sides. Surely this fragile middle ground for accommodation deserves the sympathetic hearing of all Americans who desire peace in Israel and the occupied territories.

Mrs. Levin displays an astonishing ignorance of history for someone who is president of a Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America [CAMERA] when she insinuates that the British had allocated all of Palestine and Transjordan to be the homeland for Jewish immigrants. She does, however, raise the interesting point that Palestinians rooted in their villages since the time of Jesus may have had Jewish ancestors. Why does she then dismiss this idea, which some Palestinians entertain in arguing their claim to the land against Europeans of uncertain origins?

As a political-science professor who has taught courses on the Arab-Israeli conflict over the past two decades at the University of Michigan and at the University of Texas at Austin, I intend to show this documentary to my students and assign the accompanying paperback volume, edited by Elizabeth W. Fernea and Mary Evelyn Hocking (University of Texas Press, 1992). I do not understand why Mrs. Levin puts quotation marks around the term noted scholars, in referring to those who contributed to this volume. Does she mean to ridicule scholars like Yehoshafat Harkabi, a professor emeritus at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and former director of Israeli military intelligence?

I strongly recommend both the film and the book to your readers. . . . They articulate the views of some of Israel's most courageous defenders, trying in their own ways, often at great personal sacrifice, to reconcile conflicting demands of justice and security.

CLEMENT MOORE HENRY  
University of Texas  
Austin, Texas

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:  
In her excellent article, Andrea Levin refers to the origins of

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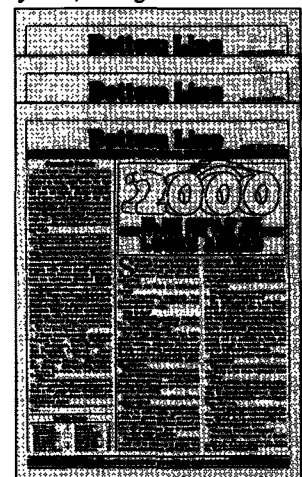
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Transjordan (now Jordan) as being created in 1921 by the British who simply carved away 70 percent of the territory allotted for the Jewish homeland, expelled all Jews from the area, and handed it over to the Hashemites.

This statement is incorrect. In 1922 the British got the League of Nations to accept the postponement or withholding (but not termination) of the application of the Jewish-national-home provisions of the Palestine Mandate in 78 percent of Palestine, the area east of the Jordan River. But Transjordan remained part of Palestine until 1946, with 22 of 28 articles of the Mandate still applicable. The Jews were still entitled to rights in Transjordan, including religion, education, and individual settlement.

What is "postponed" can be later granted and what is "withheld" is not terminated. Transjordan remained a province of Palestine, with Abdullah, formerly Emir of the Hedjaz, as governor.

Thus Israel now possesses only 22 percent of Mandatory Palestine, and the Kingdom of Jordan (formerly Transjordan) is the Arab state in Palestine, ruled by a Palestinian Arab king, born in Amman, Palestine, in 1935. (See Paul Riebenfeld, "The Integrity of Palestine," *Midstream*, August/September, 1975.)

EDWARD M. SIEGEL  
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

After reading Andrea Levin's detailed analysis of just one of twelve shows PBS has run critical of Israel, I asked myself, . . . who funds these political broadsides? The answer is, we do. Some of the funding comes from public monies via the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Some of it comes from oil companies, such as Mobil and ARAMCO, which receive certain tax benefits. And some comes from foundations with views hostile to Israel and sympathetic to Arabs. These foundations also benefit from our tax laws.

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, a "catalyst for change" (as described on PBS at the end of its sponsored programs), has been particularly partisan. The MacArthur Foundation has provided hundreds of thousands of dollars to support Helena Cobban, a researcher on the PLO

and an anti-Israel activist; *New Outlook* and *Middle East Report* magazines; the Middle East Institute; a computer network which disseminates anti-Israel information and coordinates anti-Israel activities; and several projects exposing Israel's nuclear arsenal. An offshoot, the J. Roderick MacArthur Foundation, has funded *My Home, My Prison*, a film by Raymonda Tawil, a Palestinian journalist and mother-in-law of Yasir Arafat; *Children of the Intifada* by the Association of Arab-American University Graduates; *The Woman Next Door*, about "human rights in the Israeli-occupied territories"; and many pro-Palestinian groups, whose activities range from human-rights inspections of Israeli jails to legal assistance for . . . Palestinian deportees and the PLO.

The best-known impropriety of PBS funding is the documentary *Days of Rage*, which was underwritten by the Arab American Cultural Foundation, a front-group for Hisham Sharabi, a friend and adviser to Yasir Arafat. Most of the money for the PBS show came from foreign (i.e., Kuwaiti) sources.

Multinational oil companies, such as Mobil and ARAMCO, have obvious economic ties to the Arab world. These companies have lobbied Congress for arms and have lobbied the American people for the Arab cause via PBS. . . .

SETH COREY  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Andrea Levin thoroughly documents her conclusion that PBS's "skewed vision of Middle Eastern reality" violates "its own written statutes mandating objectivity and balance on controversial subjects. . . ." But the defect is more fundamental, in my opinion, than a matter of financing. . . . PBS program determinations are not influenced by financial contributions from Arab sources or by the persuasiveness of pro-Arab, anti-Israel organizations. Rather, its decision-makers deeply believe that what they present on the air meets the tests of objectivity and balance. . . . These decision-makers are dogged and truculent anti-Zionists and they instinctively seek out the organizations and individuals who produce the kind of product Andrea Levin describes. . . .

JOSEPH LERNER  
Jerusalem, Israel

ANDREA LEVIN writes:

Elizabeth W. Fernea's response to my critique of her "Perspectives on Peace" project is as self-serving and fallacious as the work itself. She offers the worn-out evasion that I am part of "the conservative attack on federal funding for PBS." It is a pinched, ideological vision indeed that assumes people of varied political views cannot agree in opposing the mutilation of truth. It is not only "conservatives" who are appalled at the kind of manipulation of history Professor Fernea has perpetrated, such as citing the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine but omitting its express purpose of creating a Jewish homeland and excluding from a chronology of events in her study guide all acts of Arab terror against Jews as well as any mention of the Holocaust. It is not partisan to object when the labels "terrorist" and "massacre" are applied only to the actions of Jews and not once to those of Arabs, when all reference to the bloody chronicle of PLO violence against Israel and Jews is excluded. So extreme are the transgressions against balance and accuracy in her film and its attendant "educational" materials that only individuals of the political fringes would condone them.

Professor Fernea's references to PBS's responsibility for "Perspectives on Peace" are peculiar; she argues that PBS cannot be faulted since it did not "originate" her project. But PBS promoted her film, study guide, book of essays, and panel discussion; aired the documentary numerous times on its network across the United States; and orchestrated a live videoconference from more than a dozen academic sites around the country. In my view all this constitutes responsibility. I never said PBS funded the work.

As to funding, Professor Fernea confirms my statement that ARAMCO partly underwrote the project. That the Middle East Institute, on whose board of governors she sits, contributed to Americans for Peace Now is no credit to that group, but she would have been clearer about the nature of the Institute's grant recipients if she had mentioned the American Educational Trust, whose purpose is to distribute to public libraries across the U.S. such items as the *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, the glossiest anti-Israel magazine in the country.

Professor Fernea asserts that her project is intended to advance constructive discussion among Americans about the conflict between "Israelis and Palestinians" and that such an effort ought to avoid focusing on the "bitter history of the conflict." To characterize these claims as dishonest hardly captures the ruthlessness with which she actually *obstructs* constructive discussion, suppressing views that conflict with her premise that Israel bears total responsibility for all the problems of the Middle East. The parade of speakers in her film, panelists on her panel, contributors to her book of essays, Arabs and Jews alike, agree overwhelmingly on Israel's culpability. Professor Fernea exercises the ultimate power of the film-maker and editor: she censors all debate.

In the same vein, the notion that she did not focus on the "bitter" history out of a desire to enhance, in her words, "prospects for the future" is another deceit. The study guide itself is history, though fraudulent, from cover to cover. The film contains repeated instances of historical error, as do all the other components in the project. Worthy of note here, too, is her reduction of the Arab-Israeli conflict to one involving only Israelis and Palestinians. Obviously she would prefer to avoid drawing attention to the array of Arab nations that continue to maintain a state of war with Israel, to acquire weapons of mass destruction, and to promote anti-Semitism in their government-regulated media. Like her unabashedly skewed line-up of interviewees and contributors, her garbled history is designed to sell Americans the Arab version of the Middle East conflict. When Professor Fernea says she wants to bypass history, she means she wants to omit inconvenient intrusions of the record that point to Arab irredentism, violence, and failure.

My respect for the ADL is all the

greater for knowing of its forthright response to her pro-PLO film. CAMERA also issued an "alert" on the occasion of the current PBS film in an effort to inform members about the mendacity of her project. And so we will again if the need arises. Professor Fernea may have the authority to silence dissent in the confines of her films and books; she has none beyond that.

Professor Fernea's query as to why it should matter that she primarily used Christians to represent Palestinian Arab opinion is again disingenuous. Muslims are the overwhelming majority of Palestinian Arabs, constituting 95 percent of the population. Muslim fundamentalism to which, as I wrote, she devoted exactly one-half of one sentence, is the most potentially destabilizing force now emerging in the region, including among Palestinian Arabs, and leading Muslim clerics have expressed rabidly anti-Semitic attitudes. The average viewer would be likely to consider these points, as well as Muslim fundamentalist assaults on Middle East Christian communities, relevant to the "Prospects for Peace." Professor Fernea acknowledges that only three out of nine speakers were Muslim. Were she just a trifle more candid, she might have mentioned that Christian imagery and music and Christian speakers occupied the bulk of the film. In contrast, not a single Islamic shrine or cleric was in evidence.

My wording about Joel Beinin's nationality was unclear, but my description of his promotion of "revisionist" Israeli history and of his active participation in the most virulent anti-Israel groups was entirely correct.

I never said I objected to "compromise." I may have said I objected to Professor Fernea's notions of compromise, premised as they are on falsehood about the forces in the region that have a

bearing on the achievement of peace. (Did she mean, perhaps, that she ought to be allowed some compromise figure of lies about Israel? Say, a few dozen?) True compromise is inevitable in any future agreement, just as it has been in the past when Israel displayed notable courage in relinquishing territory and assets for genuine peace agreements. (Professor Fernea's study guide also omits any mention whatsoever of Israel's return of the entire Sinai, including air bases and oil fields, to Egypt under the Camp David agreements.)

Professor Fernea remembers our phone conversation as constructive. I remember her remarks as consistent with the tone of her letter here, imperious and self-serving.

Clement Moore Henry, a colleague of Professor Fernea's at the University of Texas, reiterates her calls for peace premised on spurious "common denominators," in this case, of course, the joint criticism of Israeli actions by a fringe group of Jews in tandem with the Arabs. As to his odd assertion that the British Mandate did not include a Jewish homeland encompassing present-day Jordan, I refer him to the details of Edward M. Siegel's letter, or, indeed, to any mainstream history text.

Seth Corey touches importantly on the web of financing that underlies some PBS programming and helps to fuel the surge of tainted "educational" products, including journals, study guides, and the like, that may have far-reaching effects on American perceptions of history and fact in the Middle East.

Joseph Lerner's view that PBS decision-makers proffer anti-Israel materials out of personal animus may be true in some cases, and not in others. Does it matter why? I think above all we have to expose the shoddy product, and not worry about the motive that caused it.



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# Straight Talk About Gays

*E.L. Pattullo*

THE campaign for gay rights steadily gains ground. Just this past summer, a young Eagle Scout, recently emerged from the closet, filed a suit that bids fair to overturn Scouting's ban on homosexual members. The dismissal of a full colonel in the National Guard after she publicly acknowledged her lesbianism prompted wide protest. In the first round of his presidential candidacy, Ross Perot stumbled when he seemed to suggest homosexuality would disqualify one for service in his cabinet. Bill Clinton, on the other hand, won widespread acclaim by promising to end the prohibition against homosexuals in the military and to press the gay-rights agenda. Across the country, colleges and state and local governments which have not yet acted are pondering regulations that would prohibit discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. Early in the fall, Cambridge, Massachusetts approved legislation extending "spousal rights" to partners of homosexual employees.

There are a few pockets of resistance, stemming almost entirely from religious considerations. Some years ago, when he was England's chief rabbi, Sir Immanuel Jakobovits, writing in the *London Times*, insisted that "All the authentic sources of Judaism condemn homosexual relations as a heinous offense." In mid-July of this year, the press reported a directive from the Vatican to U.S. bishops instructing them about the areas in which it is legitimate to discriminate against homosexuals. And in Oregon, Protestant evangelicals were behind the extremist move to proclaim homosexuality "abnormal, wrong, unnatural, and perverse" (in the words of Oregon's Ballot Measure 9, which was rightly defeated last month).\*

But what about people who are neither extremist nor subject to religious dicta on the question, who are neither homosexual nor homophobic, and who are still uneasy about the movement to abolish all societal distinctions between heterosexual and homosexual? Is there a secular reason

for such people to resist this movement? I think there is.

I begin with the fact that there is much we do not know about human sexuality, especially on the all-important issue of how sexual orientation is determined. For any to whom this is not self-evident, I invoke the conclusion of John Money, emeritus professor of psychology at Johns Hopkins, who is widely respected, by gays and straights alike, as one of the leading experts on the subject. In an April 1987 article in the *American Psychologist* (later expanded into the book *Gay, Straight, and In-Between*), he writes:

On the issue of the determinants of sexual orientation . . . the only scholarly position is to allow that prenatal and postnatal determinants are not mutually exclusive.

Despite our ignorance, however, there is good reason to think that a very substantial number of people are born with the potential to live either straight or gay lives. But, again, just as no one knows why a person becomes straight or gay, no one knows how many people, at birth, have the potential to mature into either one of these sexual orientations.

In Alfred Kinsey's landmark study, nearly 50 years ago, 37 percent of the men and 13 percent of the women reported responding, to the point of orgasm, to members of their own sex sometime during their lives. But we cannot be sure how representative Kinsey's sample was of the whole population. According to a 1991 NAS-NRC study which examined the results of five probability surveys (all limited to males and concerning only their adult experience), about 5 to 7 percent of the respondents admitted same-gender sexual contact. But the study warned that these "estimates might be considered lower bounds on the actual prevalence of such contact."

STILL, whatever the exact numbers may be, it is clear that many people have a capacity for becoming either straight or gay. In addition, it is almost certain that the social envi-

E.L. PATTULLO was, until his retirement in 1987, director of the Center for the Behavioral Sciences, associate chairman of the department of psychology, and director of the psychological laboratories at Harvard University.

\* However, a less extreme initiative outlawing "protective status based on homosexual, lesbian, or bisexual orientation" passed in Colorado.

ronment plays a part, though we do not know just what that part is, in determining one's primary sexual orientation.

Not for everyone. Many straights and gays insist that they have never strayed from their predominant sexual orientation in thought, word, or deed. However, there are also many others who fall somewhere in the middle of the continuum. It is these individuals with whom I am principally concerned here, and I will refer to them as "waverers."

It is the fact that there is a bit of the waverer in so many of us, I believe, which explains the stubborn persistence of some prejudice against homosexuals, even among those who abhor the mistreatment they have suffered. Often, straights are threatened not because gays are so different, but because they are so similar. Some straights are quite conscious of having homosexual proclivities and are fearful of undermining their predominant heterosexuality. Others unconsciously share the same fear. Even those wholly unthreatened recognize the existence of a temptation that could endanger the heterosexuality of loved ones—particularly children and young adults.

Whether there is ground in reality for these fears remains a question. Money, in the article mentioned earlier, asserts, without explaining, that "the concept of voluntary choice is as much in error here as in its application to handedness or to native language."

Now, few would disagree that something as basic as sexual orientation must be the result of a chain of events so complex that we are unaware of having made a choice—in the sense of preferring chocolate to vanilla. However, it seems possible that substantial numbers of youngsters do have the capacity to "choose" in the same sense they "choose" the character that will mark them as adults—that is, through a sustained, lengthy process of considered and unconsidered behaviors. Though we acknowledge some influences—social and biological—beyond their control, we do not accept the idea that people of bad character had no choice. Further, we are concerned to maintain a social climate that will steer them in the direction of the good.

Several recent research reports have suggested that, in some cases, genes may be at the root of a homosexual orientation, but none pretends to be conclusive. Many people, straight and gay, welcome such evidence, believing that society's prejudice would dissipate faster were it established that homosexuals are born, not made. But to date, evidence that genes (or hormones, which probably play a more important role) are a sufficient cause of human sexual preference is nonexistent, and no serious student of human sexuality is prepared to deny that nurture is an important factor.

Not even Money denies it. While dismissing as

obsolete the old nature-nurture controversy and insisting that social learning is no less biological than genes or hormones, Money acknowledges that such learning depends upon what society teaches:

Sheep, cattle and swine and other four-legged species are, more or less, hormonal robots insofar as a masculine or feminine mating pattern can be foreordained on the basis of regulating the prenatal hormonalization of the brain. Even among sheep, however, the final outcome will be influenced by whether the lamb grew up in a normal flock of ewes and rams or in a sex-segregated herd. Primates are even more influenced by the social conditions of growing up and are less subject to hormonal robotization.

**S**URELY decency demands that those who find themselves homosexual be treated with dignity and respect. But surely, too, reason suggests that we guard against doing anything which might mislead wavering children into perceiving society as indifferent to the sexual orientation they develop.

Not all will agree as to what reason suggests. A gay friend, wholly content with his orientation and unable to imagine being straight, nevertheless insists that the advantages of being straight are so apparent that no one, young or old, could possibly mistake them. There is no doubt that this is true at present, especially when AIDS remains rampant and when the drive toward full equality for homosexuals is still short of its goal. But the question is whether the advantages would continue to be so apparent—especially to young waverers—if, as, and when all legal and social distinctions between straights and gays have disappeared.

After all, the young are powerfully influenced—in sexual as well as in other matters—by the values of the peers with whom they associate. In a wholly nondiscriminatory world, the advantages of heterosexuality would not be obvious. It seems plausible that, in such a world, waverers who happened to fall in with predominantly homosexual peers and adults would be likely to gravitate toward the gay rather than the straight life.

All the more so when we consider how much the cultural climate in our own world has already changed with respect to homosexuality. In a growing number of schools throughout the country, children are taught that the gay life is as desirable as the straight—if not indeed more desirable—and such instruction (which is often hard to distinguish from outright indoctrination) begins as early as the elementary grades. The same idea is increasingly propagated on television and in films. And it is strongly reinforced in colleges and universities.

Nor, curiously, has the appearance of AIDS

affected the growing acceptance of homosexuality as a completely legitimate "alternative lifestyle." If anything, the opposite has been the case, perhaps because gay-rights activists and their straight supporters have been so successful in spreading the notion that heterosexuals are as threatened by AIDS as are homosexuals. One consequence of this may have been to remove the additional obstacle which the fear of AIDS would otherwise have placed in the way of male waverers who are tempted by homosexuality (and who, in an age of aggressive feminism, may also be even more frightened of girls than they would formerly have been).

In depicting these developments, I am not endorsing the "seduction" theory of the genesis of homosexuality. That is, I do not believe that one's sexual orientation is significantly affected simply by a traumatic, early sexual encounter, be it actual genital contact or simply an emotional attachment. However, if learning has a role in fixing sexual orientation, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the values of friends, as well as the gender of those with whom one first enjoys the raptures of erotic love, will influence the direction of future sexual preference.

Here again, I repeat, there are certainly many at either end of the continuum who from earliest memory are so strongly attracted either to those of their own or to those of the other sex as to be impervious to change, whatever the environment. But it is a good bet that substantial numbers of children have the capacity to grow in either direction. Such young waverers, who until now have been raised in an environment overwhelmingly biased toward heterosexuality, might succumb to the temptations of homosexuality in a social climate that was entirely evenhanded in its treatment of the two orientations.

Hence to the extent that society has an interest both in reproducing itself and in strengthening the institution of the family—and to the extent that parents have an interest in reducing the risk that their children will become homosexual—there is warrant for resisting the movement to abolish all societal distinctions between homosexual and heterosexual.

**H**ERE we confront a dilemma: how can we rid society of irrational prejudice against gays if explicit evidence of society's bias against homosexuality is an important element in the process by which many children become straight adults?

I do not know the answer, nor, I think, does anyone else. But in the absence of an answer, we proceed as if the dilemma did not exist. Already, in many circles, any who question any part of the gay-rights agenda are branded bigots and homophobes, deserving only of obloquy. Why?

A principal reason is that most straights have acquaintances and many have close friends or

relatives, sometimes their own children, who are homosexual. Knowing how much these have suffered in the past; aware that in all respects other than sexual orientation they differ not at all from straights; seeing how much homosexuals have gained through the changes already accomplished, we are reluctant to acknowledge that some social distinctions may still be justified. In addition, most well-educated people, identifying the plight of homosexuals with that of racial minorities and women, conclude that there is no more basis for discriminating between gay and straight than between men and women or between those of dark and light skin.

It is indubitable, however, that skin color and gender are genetically determined, whereas it is certain that—often, if not always—the postnatal environment influences sexual orientation. Until we know otherwise, we must assume that our conscious attitudes and behavior toward homosexuality play a part in this process. At present this is only speculation, but it is a more plausible speculation than that which posits no connection between sexual orientation and social mores.

In this state of uncertainty, there is no justification for governmental action giving homosexuals a special status and making it illegal to discriminate in any way on grounds of sexual orientation. The question is best handled by allowing individuals and institutions to act as they will—within the civil-rights boundaries that currently protect everyone, gay and straight alike. But the argument offered here—that we know too little about the genesis of sexual orientation safely to outlaw discrimination in all areas—points to a few guidelines.

Basing myself on this argument, I would deny homosexual couples the privilege of adoption and, in custody cases involving natural parents, I would discriminate in favor of a straight parent over a gay one, other things being equal. Similarly, organizations like the Boy Scouts, whose *raison d'être* is to shape the character and psyche of growing children, should remain free to exclude avowed homosexuals from their ranks. Schools should also be able to insist that homosexual elementary- and secondary-school teachers not flaunt their sexual orientation in ways likely to influence their pupils. Nor should schools be forced to authorize the formation of gay and lesbian student organizations, let alone to propagandize their pupils. How this is to be squared with the First Amendment I leave to the courts; certainly the problem of just how and where to draw the line will fuel endless debate in many a school committee.

Though I am uneasy at the spectacle of assertively homosexual resident advisers in undergraduate dormitories, I doubt that colleges should restrict gays—some of whom are our best teachers—in any way. (My own institution, Harvard, ever at the cutting edge, has long since

banned discrimination on the basis of sexual preference, as has the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.) Since sexual orientation may well be settled by college age, there is less warrant for discrimination in higher education.

On the other hand, many youngsters still become sexually active only in their late teens, so this may be a time when the waverers among them are at a critical point in the determination of their predominant orientation. The uncertainty is such that colleges should be free to adopt differing policies. (Many religious institutions, of course, regard homosexuality as sinful and will want to discriminate against gays on that ground—but that is a different question.)

**I** BELIEVE my obvious ambivalence about the appropriate role for gays in a straight society is widely shared. For that reason, and because my main purpose is to promote the kind of reasoned discussion that has been conspicuously absent to date, let me briefly state three counter-arguments that occur to me.

Treating homosexuals differently in any way condemns youngsters, who from earliest memory know themselves to be gay, to growing up in full awareness of society's desire that they become what they cannot be—straight. An eagerly awaited result of the gay-rights movement has been the possibility of creating a better environment for such youngsters by including homosexual role models among teachers, care-givers, etc. Whether the lot of these children will be much eased in a society that is tolerant of gays, while explicit about limiting their role, is highly questionable. Children are cruel, and just as short or unathletic or homely boys and girls suffer for their state, so would those who differ in sexual preference.

More basic is the contention of my comfortably gay friend, mentioned earlier, that the advantages of being straight are so obvious that none can ever mistake them. My initial response was that this view is an artifact of cultural history, in which homophobia has long been so widespread that it is almost impossible to imagine what society would look like in its absence. But, conceivably, there is something inherent in the human psyche that prompts everyone to recognize that heterosexuality is preferable, whatever his own orientation. Like an instinct, this may be ineradicable. If so, even total success in abolishing overt discrimination would do little to increase the odds of waverers growing up to be gay rather than straight.

Obviously, this would blow my thesis right out of the water. It is not, however, an argument that will appeal to gay activists, implying as it does that even in an entirely nondiscriminatory world a homosexual orientation would always be recognized as a misfortune. Still, in the present state of our knowledge, this is among the possibilities.

The most persuasive objection is one that will find favor especially with those, gay and straight, who have never wavered in their sexual orientation and thus have no feeling for the many who have. It is this: precisely *because* we do not understand the role of environment or nurture in the development of sexual preference, we should proceed to abolish all discrimination against homosexuals. We know success in that endeavor would make life much easier for gays, and we do not know that it would do any harm. Indeed, it may even be that the environmental factors which contribute to homosexuality are completely independent of our conscious attitudes and behaviors. If common sense seems to suggest otherwise, on scientific questions common sense is more often wrong than right. Nutrition, hormonal processes, unknown family circumstances, or social interactions that apparently have nothing to do with sexual orientation—any or all of these (sometimes, perhaps, combined with a genetic predisposition) may be responsible for the effect.

According to this line of thought, reason suggests not—as I have insisted—that we abandon the drive to abolish all distinctions between gays and straights, but that we accept some risk in order to seize the good represented by a society free of discrimination. The risk we would accept is only that a certain number of children would live gay lives when they might have lived straight ones. But in a genuinely nondiscriminatory world that should be no great tragedy; in fact, if overpopulation continues to threaten the planet, gay adults might become more socially valuable than straight ones.

**B**UT be all that as it may, we must start from where we are. And where we are is that increasing numbers of straights, as well as gays, are determined to rid society of irrational hatred of homosexuals. At the same time, the heterosexual community remains firm in its conviction that it is better to be straight than gay, and few parents want to do anything that might increase the chances of their children growing up homosexual. Though our knowledge of how society and culture affect the development of sexual preference is sadly limited, we dare not risk failing to give children clear, repeated signals as to society's preference.

Even as we move to abolish gay-baiting and gay-bashing, therefore, we have good reason to resist the demand of gay-rights activists that any and every difference in the treatment of homosexuals be entirely outlawed. We must be sophisticated enough to change the attitudes and actions that are prompted only by irrational prejudice, while retaining distinctions that may be necessary to ensure that all children clearly understand the desirability of growing up to be heterosexual adults.

# My Uncle Yitzhak: A Memoir of I.B. Singer

Maurice Carr

“SUCH,” says my uncle Yitzhak, taking an awestruck sniff at his boiled egg, which stinks, “yes, such is life!”

There is a moment of silence, followed by a burst of hilarity that rocks the breakfast table. Yitzhak sits with bowed head over the bad egg, and his air of otherworldly absence raises the merriment to a new pitch. Even his melancholy elder brother Shiya (short for Yehoshua) grins. Shiya’s dumpy wife very nearly falls off her chair. Only half-amused is Hindele, sister to the two Singer brothers. With a wry smile she repeats: “Such, yes, such is life!”

Antoshu, the maid, serves a fresh hard-boiled egg, the meal is resumed in a more subdued mood, and little Yossele trills: “When I’m big, I’ll take papa up on the roof and give him a whipping!” At two-and-a-half he is bitterly jealous of his father Shiya’s favorite, seven-year-old Yasha.

MUCH has happened since that day on the veranda of a bungalow in a pinewood dacha near Warsaw. Its landlord, the folk poet Alter Katzisner, and the Yiddish literati to whom he rented out a score of such bungalows for the summer, are long since dead. Most, but not all, perished in the Holocaust. The child Yasha died a natural death, of pneumonia, in Warsaw. His father Shiya went down with a heart attack at an early age in New York, and his mother Genya followed. So did Hindele—my mother—some years later, in London, where my parents had come as World War I refugees and where I grew up. The sole survivors are Yossele who has grown up into Joseph Singer living in America, and my own aged Tel Aviv self.

And now it is my uncle Yitzhak’s turn. Of all things, it is that buffoonery of his, in the long-ago year of 1926, which comes back to me as I stand before a kiosk in Paris in 1991, staring and stared at by front-page obituaries in the French morning papers for Isaac Bashevis Singer. The leftist daily *Libération* carries a photograph of him covering two-thirds of the front page. The caption in a large red box announces: “YIDDISH LOSES

SINGER. Isaac Bashevis Singer, the last great writer in the Yiddish language, died Wednesday, aged 87. See page 2.” I see page 2 and go on to pages 3, 4, and 5, wholly and reverentially devoted to the Nobel laureate of literature, the Singer who sang the swan song of our *mameh loshn*, the Yiddish mother tongue.

I turn again to the front-page photo, a studio portrait of Bashevis—Yiddishists call him simply that—in the pose of a comedian. Against a backdrop of phantoms painted on a screen, he stands holding an umbrella in his outstretched right hand, too far out of line to keep the make-believe rain from his skin-and-bones figure, and wearing sunglasses against the make-believe sunlight. Shabby in an ill-fitting, outsized, expensive suit, with a trilby hat jammed tight on his cranium, he looks tense, though his gaunt face bears a faint smile blending mockery with resignation—the same blend that sets the tone of his masterly novels and short stories.

What do I have to tell that his painstaking biographers and his obituarists in the world media have missed? Well, of utmost relevance to him, who was through no fault of his own my uncle, is the old Yiddish saw: *Dos eppele falt nisht veit fun boimele* (the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree), meaning that the key to personality is in the family genes.

The paradoxical was the norm for my uncle Yitzhak. So he, who insisted he did not give two straws for kinship, adopted the pseudonym Bashevis after his mother Bathsheva; to get to know him better, we must first be introduced to her. Quite exceptional, too, was the relationship between him and his elder brother Shiya, known to the world as the novelist I. J. (for Israel Joshua) Singer.

Long before I, at age thirteen, met my uncle Yitzhak and my grandmother Bathsheva in the flesh—not that there was much flesh on them to speak of—I was on more intimate terms with them than with my next-door Cockney neighbors in London. How come? Because from as far back as I can remember, day in, day out, year after year, my mother had plied me in a nostalgic singsong with reminiscences, detailed and vivid, about her folks in the old country, *die alte heim*.

Where to begin if not at the beginning?

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IN THE latter half of the 19th century the small Polish town of Bilgoray boasts an orphan of unknown parentage who is an *ilui*, a genius. He memorizes Scripture at a single reading, and mounts the pulpit to deliver his first homily as a boy of nine. At the first sprouting of a beard, the local hasidim importune him to become their *tzaddik*, their holy man who will hasten the advent of the Messiah and the resurrection of all past generations. But Reb Mordechai, as he is called, declares himself a *misnagid*, a rejecter of end-of-days fantasies and a firm believer in the Torah's rule that mortal man is fated to return eternally to the dust out of which he was created.

Appointed rabbi of Bilgoray, Reb Mordechai is offered positions in Warsaw and other large cities, but always turns them down. To the delegations who come to petition him he puts a stock question: "Is there a Jewish cemetery in your parts?" Reassured on this score, he turns them away with a shrug: "We also have one in Bilgoray." There is to this *misnagid* rabbi an aura so palpable that he is said to have averted a pogrom one Easter Sunday when, standing in the doorway of the synagogue, with upraised hands he stopped a mob of peasants armed with hatchets and pitchforks. Come to avenge the crucifixion of Jesus, they wavered, backed away, and dispersed without bloodshed and without pillage.

Like father, like daughter. Like Reb Mordechai, so also Bathsheva. She, too, is a genius, and an expert into the bargain in scholarly disputation (*pilpul*), able to hold her own in discourse with the rabbi and to reconcile seemingly blatant contradictions in Torah and Talmud. The rabbi is less fortunate with his two sons. Both are scholars and ordained rabbis, but the one harbors grandiose mercantile dreams, while the other is a dandy whose earlocks and ritual fringes bob, positively waltz, with superb elegance.

Comes puberty and the time for marriage of the near-skeletal maiden with the shock of red hair that will be shaved to accommodate a wig, and with enormous steely eyes in a tiny, fiercely angular, deathly pale face perched proudly on a scrawny neck. The search is on for an intended who will be worthy of her. The choice falls on the teenaged Pinhas Menahem Singer, a talmudist and kabbalist of the first order, who traces his ancestry back to the medieval sage Joseph Caro and even farther back to David the Psalmist king.

If ever a mismatch could be called perfect, this is it. Bathsheva carries in her womanly frame a manly spirit. Unlike her husband, she has in her the makings of a chief rabbi, one who would not have hesitated to accept a pulpit in Warsaw or might even perhaps have betaken herself to Jerusalem. The better to express her grievance against Jehovah, the bungling Maker of her misbirth, she is all the more meticulous in her observance of His divine commandments.

Mysterious are the ways of the Lord. What better husband could Bathsheva have found than Pinhas Menahem, harboring in his frail but masculine frame a tender womanly spirit? With a heart as soft and as golden as his fluffy beard, his she-he persona has nothing in it of the warrior monarch. More's the pity that in one respect he does bear a likeness to his royal forefather, the Psalmist. As a kind of truant hasid, he often steals away to the court of the Gerer *tzaddik*, there to dance and sing to the glory of the unutterable Name for weeks on end. To boot, he shirks the Russian-language examination required of the clergy under czarist law, so that when the time comes for him to act the breadwinner and paterfamilias, he can do no better than serve as a poor clandestine rabbi, first in the poorest of poor *shtetlach*, and later in the slummiest of Warsaw's slums, on Krochmalna Street. All this will be so much grist for the mill of the eventual Singer storyteller.

While the newlyweds are still *kestkinder*, boarders living on the largesse of the Bilgoray rabbi's household, Bathsheva suffers several dread years of sterility. At last, blessedly pregnant, she expects a son—her due, to make amends for her own mistaken gender—but Jehovah sees fit to curse her with a daughter to whom she refuses the breast. The search for a wet nurse yields one whose nipples squirt milk so abundantly that it dribbles all over the face of the unwanted newborn. The infant, named Hinde Esther, is taken away by the wet nurse to a tumbledown one-room shack crammed with a horde of children and a husband pounding away at his cobbler's bench, a shack so crowded that the only floor space for the crib is under the table.

Punctually once a week Bathsheva comes by to stoop and regard, but never to touch, let alone fondle, her misbegotten child—my mother-to-be. At the age of three, blinded by cobwebs and dust from the underside of the table, Hindele is brought home and, with the benediction of the Bilgoray rabbi, she partially recovers her sight. But for the rest of her life her eyelids will either twitch, as if to be rid of the glaze filming her bloodshot eyeballs, or flutter wildly, as if beholding an apparition visible to none but herself.

I LEARN early on to listen and not to interrupt my mother Hindele's recital of bygones, addressed first and last to herself. Even so, she never fails to answer my unasked questions. Does she remember her under-the-table outcast self and also the happenings and mishaps that took place before ever she was born? Oh, no, she is merely retelling what she heard later from her mother Bathsheva. Storytelling runs in the family.

Oddly enough, my mother is less profuse with her own memories, except for an occasional trancelike recall of her encounters with a hand-

some, noble, emancipated, clean-shaven young Jewish poet wearing a cloak in Warsaw's elegant Saxony Gardens. For the rest, she speaks less of herself than of her three brothers—of Shiya, two years younger than herself, with passion, fierce love, and fierce jealousy; of Yitzhak *der roiter*, the redhead, the spitting image of his mother Bathsheva, with amusement; and last but not least, of the toddler Moshe, the golden-haired beauty whose name I, too, bear.

My mother does breathe fire, though, on the subject of her twenty-year-old self, already deemed by Bathsheva a hopeless old spinster but saved in the end by a mischievous Providence which, to spite her mother perhaps, wills otherwise. A famed itinerant preacher, one Gedalya Kreitman, serving as a fund-raiser for the ultra-Orthodox Agudath Israel organization, was looking for a bride. No, not for his potbellied self, but for his son Avraham who, to escape conscription in the czarist army, has been sent away to Antwerp, there to receive training as a diamond-cutter.

Reb Gedalya, when in Warsaw, pays daily calls on Hindele and engages her in discussion, for she is well versed in overheard Torah and Talmud. To her mother she says: "You wish to see the back of me. Very well, I shall go into exile." A marriage is arranged, to take place in a kosher hotel in Berlin—all expenses to be defrayed by Reb Gedalya, who puts up a goodly dowry and, in a further departure from custom, bedecks his prospective daughter-in-law with costly jewels.

On the train ride into exile Hindele carries in her handbag the half-dozen notebooks which she has filled with short stories and earlier shown to her mother who has read them with raised red eyebrows and without comment. Now the mother, Bathsheva, murmurs her fear that czarist frontier officers might sniff sedition in the Yiddish script. So Hindele does to the notebooks what she feels like doing to herself—she tears them up and flings the tattered shreds out of the window into green pastures where cows graze.

In the kosher hotel in Berlin, Hindele and Avraham meet and exchange nods. Next, they are escorted to a photographer's studio. And on the morrow they are married.

Before taking her place under the wedding canopy, Hindele lends an ear to a whisper from her father Reb Pinhas Menahem: "Do not be shy with your husband. What he and you will be doing is prescribed by the Torah, a holy act, of which your mother cannot have enough, she wears me out night after night."

I am proof that the nuptials were consummated.

ONE morning in the summer of 1926, the continental express carrying me and my mother pulls into the Warsaw railway terminal. There on the platform waiting for his sis-

ter Hindele is my uncle Yitzhak. I have never seen him before, but I recognize *der roiter* instantly, so unmistakable is his resemblance to Bathsheva as pictured in my mother's stories. Not so my short-sighted mother, who discovers her brother's presence only after the kisses he has vaguely darted at her fail to land on either cheek. Of me he takes no notice.

We follow my uncle into a dilapidated old train which chugs slowly out of town. With the elusive Yitzhak my habitually overeffusive mother is at a loss for words. After half an hour or so, we alight in a pine forest on burning hot sands strewn with pine cones; the air is heady with pine sap and bird-song; the golden sun in the bluest sky I have ever seen spreads light and shade with the absoluteness peculiar to dreams. Euphoric, I exult in the fulfillment of a wish so precious as to have been kept hidden even from myself. We enter a fenced-in pinewood estate, approach a bungalow, and the waking dream takes an uncanny turn.

No longer is it Yitzhak at our side. He has flown off and been replaced by a taller and older self, still slim but not the scraggy, elusive, ethereal youth who has escorted us thus far; his gaunt face has become handsome; the ears still stick out, but they no longer look like the wings of a bat about to fly off; the massive bulging cranium has lost its mop of red hair; and, most notable of all, that indifferent faraway gaze has given way to a strange, a very strange, glitter in the whites of the eyes conveying absolute authority and absolute melancholy.

This, of course, is none other than my uncle Shiya. With a shriek of mingled joy and pain my mother throws herself upon him in an embrace so absolute as to be more than sisterly. With a struggle he disengages himself, takes a backward step, and fixes her with a glare that blends compassion with revulsion, a look which cautions his sister to understand that though pity may have moved him to invite her to a family reunion, she had best not delude herself into thinking she can thrust herself upon him for good, for already she has made a pest of herself and the sooner she goes back to where she came from, back to her unloved husband in London, the better.

My mother blinks frenziedly and bites her underlip to keep silent. For the rest of our stay she will hold herself aloof from Shiya, will look down on his wife Genya as unworthy of him, will ignore and be ignored by Yitzhak, will consort with the dacha literati and their womenfolk, and will have little to say to me. As of now, her past is a closed book and I have ceased to be her audience.

There are no dacha children my own age, so I strike up a friendship of sorts with seventeen-year-old Uri, who spends entire days over Hebrew manuals in preparation for *aliyah*, ascent to the land of Israel. The sport I revel in is uncle-watching, and it seems to have many practitioners. The dacha hums with talk of the rapport between the

two Singer brothers. There is little love for the older Shiya. Again and again I, the eavesdropper, hear the same refrain: young Yitzhak will one day outstrip (the Yiddish term is *ibervaksn*, grow taller than) his older brother.

That Shiya's recently published short-story collection, *Perl* ("Pearls"), lives up to its title is an accepted fact, and one that goes unchallenged. But he is begrudged the stroke of good fortune that has come with it. On the strength of this first published book he has been made a correspondent for the New York *Jewish Daily Forward*, and has thereby leaped overnight from destitution to affluence. The envy this has aroused is natural, but far from natural is the gut animosity he provokes in the many, as is also the fascination he exerts on the few who are spellbound in their devotion to him.

The dacha literati take it for granted that Yitzhak belongs to the unloving majority but chooses to act like one of the devoted few. Shiya behaves like a patronizing but protective father to Yitzhak, who assumes the part of a meek son and protégé. The smart-alecks would have it that behind this display is a sophisticated variant of the Cain and Abel theme: I. J. Singer is jealous of Yitzhak's potentially superior talent, and to nip it in the bud tries to stifle him with condescending kindness. But Yitzhak, say the observers, is not fooled and, as soon as it suits him, will let his simmering resentment explode.

I listen and I wonder.

HAPPILY, I am charged by my aunt Genya with the daily chore of fetching my two uncles to lunch. First I set out to find Yitzhak. He spends his mornings aloft in one pine tree or another, and part of the fun is locating the particular tree. What does he do up there? He reads Yiddish, Hebrew, Polish, and German prose and poetry and also studies philosophy, especially Spinoza and Kant. How do I know, since he has no *maga massa* with me, meaning in Cockney idiom that he would not touch me with a bargepole? I hear it from the literati who are waiting for him to climb down and favor them with one of his impersonations. When he chooses to perform one of these, they say, there is not a clown the length and breadth of Poland who can hold a candle to my uncle Yitzhak.

When Yitzhak proves deaf to my call for lunch (I shall have to come back a second time), I run off and climb the ladder to the loft where, beneath a broken roof on which birds nest, my other uncle, Shiya, is busy writing. He sits on a stool before a bare wooden shelf which serves as his desk. Bemused, I watch his pen glide over a sheet of foolscap forming line after line of graceful script with never a pause. No, on second thought, he does pause now and then to change a word which is then smoothly traced onto an earlier sheet.

I stand behind his stooped back, and there is something in his posture which expresses what I have come to know about him. Already on the eve of my mother's departure for Berlin, Shiya was in revolt against the ancestral beliefs and customs. With the outbreak of the Bolshevik Revolution he, the messianic atheist, was off to Russia to help free the proletariat from oppression and establish heaven on earth. But the apparatchiks running the Yiddish press and publishing houses there had no use for him, who could neither fawn nor intrigue nor wink at corruption, and they flung his *Perl* novellas back at him as unfit for print. Disappointed first in Kiev, then in Moscow, he returned to Warsaw and triumphed. There is an aura of mastery about him now, but also a daunting melancholy that seems innate and inborn. Is his melancholy the cause of, or exacerbated by, the malevolence that surrounds him? I do not formulate the question—it emanates from him, hovers in the air.

One day, suddenly, Shiya turns to me and asks whether the language in which I think is Yiddish or English. I ponder the question and answer truthfully that my thoughts do not seem to be in any language at all. The whites of his eyes flash suspicion as well as melancholy: is this some kind of tomfoolery or *chutzpah* to get back at him perhaps for my mother's sake? Or am I just an honest imbecile? Either way, he regrets having addressed me and will never do so again.

Perhaps, if he had not turned away so impetuously, I might have had a chance to collect my wits and explain that in his company, and, indeed, throughout this summer at the dacha, I am too happy for words. Only when I am angry do I think in words and I do not now have it in me to take umbrage or even to feel sorry for my mother—I am busy reaping a harvest of impressions too rich to be ground and milled into verbal flour or kneaded and baked into the bread of common sense.

I run off to give my uncle Yitzhak his second call for lunch, knowing that when I find him he will be up a tree—in this case both literally and figuratively. (The Yiddish equivalent would be *er hengt in der luftn*, he hangs in midair.) For the time being he is a young man of high promise but humble achievement. Under a variety of pseudonyms—he has not yet become Bashevis—he dashes off merciless reviews of books and plays, has started on a Yiddish translation of Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, and tosses off cheap heart-throb romances for serialization in the daily press. He is scandalously underpaid, but as a strict vegetarian as well as a non-smoker, a non-boozer (albeit not a teetotaler), and a philanderer besieged by mistresses costing not a *zloty*, his expenses are negligible.

The literati at the foot of the tree reckon that Yitzhak is under a constraint. Storytelling will be his forte, but he aspires to originality, and to make

his mark as a groundbreaker he will have to draw on much the same wellspring of experience as his brother I.J. Singer, who has had a head start. Never mind, say the literati, he will have it in him to overcome this handicap on two scores. First, he will dig into himself for the inspiration to weave that shared life experience into a new, unique pattern. Second, he is bursting with impatience to "grow taller" than his brother and eventually overshadow him.

IN THE years and decades ahead, these speculations will come back to me, but meanwhile there I am at the foot of the pine tree, down which Yitzhak comes slithering, agile as a squirrel. Once on the ground, he is surrounded by the literati begging for an impersonation and offering a choice among three local celebrities—a nutty mystic, a pompous essayist, and an alcoholic poet (one whose talent compares favorably with Heine's and whose name will one day grace a Tel Aviv street, but of this, as of so much else, I have not the faintest premonition).

Yitzhak strikes a comic scarecrow pose, as if pondering whom best to mimic. Slowly the seconds—or is it minutes?—pass until we suddenly become aware that he is no longer there, that he has vanished from under our very noses like a phantom. How did it happen? Did he take advantage of an instant's inattention, or has he lulled his audience into a trance? Heads turn in all directions, but there is no Yitzhak and there will be no burlesque.

Not long after, as though to make up for it, my mother and I are treated in private to a memorable scene of real-life tragicomedy. The occasion is a visit to the theater. Yitzhak has invited the two of us to see a Yiddish farce running in Warsaw called *Redaktor Katchke* ("Editor Duck"). The play, aside from its funny title (*katchke* is the Yiddish equivalent of the French *canard*, meaning a whopping journalistic lie), consists of only one gag, endlessly repeated and unfailingly raising a laugh. Each time the apoplectic editor opens his mouth he lets loose a deluge of spittle, obliging the other characters to shield themselves with straw hats or parasols.

Squeezed into one seat with my mother (my uncle has obtained only two free tickets for the three of us), I find my attention straying to Yitzhak who does not, I notice, give the stage so much as a single glance. Evidently he considers this cheap fare good enough for us, while he himself gazes off into nothingness. This once I really want to be angry with him, but again I simply cannot—he is out of my reach, absent. So constant is this air of his that at table it would not be surprising to see him pour a spoonful of soup into his ear instead of his mouth. But he never does. In a pinch he is all there. From the way his temples twitch, the way he blushes and breaks out in a clammy sweat, it is plain that all manner

of potent, contradictory forces are clashing within him and liable to throw him into convulsions. But somehow the warring powers arrive at a stand-off so that, for all his feverish restlessness, he still keeps his poise.

After the show, he takes us to Shiya's apartment on elegant Leszno Street, where we spend the night. Early the next morning, back from a shopping errand, my mother and I enter with a borrowed front-door key and we are greeted by an astonishing sight. There in the hall, on the polished parquet floor, stands Yitzhak suffering what looks to be a crucifixion of sorts. His arms are stretched out to their full length and effectively nailed in place by, on the one side, a skinny young woman who has dug her fingernails into the wrist she is clutching and, on the other side, a more buxom one who is doing the same. Each wants him wholly to herself. They wage a desperate tug of war, which bids fair to split him clean down the middle, half a Yitzhak being better than none. His gaunt flushed face is wreathed in the torment of a mock-martyr.

The outcome? Events will follow their set course. The buxom maiden Runya will bear Yitzhak a son who, along with his mother, will be sent packing. Many years later, the son, Yisrael, will Hebraize the surname Singer into Zamir, and become a kibbutznik and editor of the leftist daily *Al Hamishmar*. I shall meet up with him in a Tel Aviv hotel room where he has been ignored and kept waiting by his estranged father, Yitzhak. But more of that later.

ON ANOTHER early morning in that summer of 1926, who is it I see between the pine trees, taking gingerly steps on the hot sand, but my grandmother Bathsheva? She has arrived during the night with my grandfather, Reb Pinhas Menahem, from their distant Galician *shtetl* of Zykow Stary (whither they had fled with young Moshe from troubled Warsaw during the Great War).

There is less—but also more—to Bathsheva than the word-picture that has been imprinted in my mind. Age, I suppose, has shriveled to nothing what little flesh was on her frame, now quite skeletal but still erect; her neck is scrawny beyond belief; the once-fiery red eyebrows are faded, the wig she wears is dark, deepening the mystery of how such a gaunt little face can accommodate such enormous, sunken eyes, such sharp cheekbones, so prominent a nose, and so upturned a chin. And, mystery of mysteries, how can so small and birdlike a head contain a brain capable of storing all those volumes of Torah, Talmud, and Kabbalah, not to mention that burden of agonized grievance she carries around with her against Jehovah her Maker, soured with unmotherly ruthlessness and spiced with sardonic scorn of commoners deemed lesser spirits than her exalted self?

My grandmother is accompanied by Shiya, who retreats at the approach of his sister, my mother, Hindele.

In their first encounter since parting in Berlin so many years before, mother and daughter go through the motions of a tepid embrace. Then the mother says to the daughter: "Why, Hindele, you are not at all as ugly as I thought you were!" Next my grandmother, thin lips pursed and the same grayish color as her enormous eyes, bestows a first (and last) icy glance at myself, a lad of barmitzvah age, shockingly bareheaded and barelegged, shamelessly bereft of earlocks and ritual fringes.

MY GRANDPARENTS do not take their meals with the family, but now and then I sight my grandfather Reb Pinhas Menahem, whose appearance is everything I expected—and more so. Frail, he has the dainty tread of a ballerina in rabbinic garb: black caftan, black skullcap, ritual fringes, golden earlocks bobbing to and fro, and a wavy golden beard glued to a sweet girlish face.

One evening, when the pinewood glows scarlet in the sunset, he musters the courage to approach me, unseen by Bathsheva. Within touching distance but at arm's length he stops and gazes, in quest, I suppose, of some small resemblance to the Singer family. I gaze back. Never before have I seen, nor shall I ever see again, such childlike lovingness in a grown man, or such a look of innocence but also wisdom as in those gentle blue eyes. Still within touching distance but without touching, he says in a tremolo: "I dearly love your mother Hindele and you, Moshe, her dear son, I dearly love also." And with that he turns away.

In the course of this visit I come to hear much sorrowful talk of my namesake Moshe, the youngest Singer brother. It has pleased Bathsheva to report that her beloved Moshe is so pious he decided not to make the journey to the family reunion, lest he find himself rubbing shoulders with a female in a crowded train compartment. To which Shiya, through gritted teeth, responds: "Our mother has had her way and crushed his spirit." And Yitzhak adds in a tone of resignation: "Our mother congratulates herself on having saved his soul from the everlasting hellfire into which her other sons, you and I, will be cast."

My two uncles agree that Moshe is another genius. His is far and away the best scholarly brain in the family. They relate how, after celebrating his bar mitzvah, Moshe set about organizing a Zionist youth movement, traveling far and wide over Galicia to enlist recruits. A born leader and orator, he preached the return to the Promised Land in synagogues after evening prayers. But then his mother got to work on him. "Our mother has snuffed out the will to live in her Moishale, she has buried him alive," says my mother, indignant but not the least surprised.

What surprises me, however, is my uncle Yitzhak's aloofness from his mother Bathsheva. He exchanges only a few offhand remarks with her and, in so doing, his eyes wear the same chill, steely glaze as her own. But he spends hours on end communing with, or rather listening to, his father Reb Pinhas Menahem. And something of his father's tenderness, wonder, awe, and delight flushes Yitzhak's own face, tempered or spiced with amusement. He seems to be feasting on the wonders and miracles of hasidic lore.

One day my grandparents leave the same way they came—unannounced. I presume my mother has seen them off, but she does not speak of it. And soon after, it is our turn to leave as well. My uncle Yitzhak takes us to the Warsaw train station, and once again the kisses he darts at my mother's cheek miss their mark. She and I stand together in the corridor of the train. She waves goodbye through the open window, but thanks to her short-sightedness fails to see that he has vanished from the platform.

YIDDISH literature has been permanently enriched by Isaac Bashevis Singer's masterly novel, *Satan in Goray*, set in 17th-century Poland and describing how the remnants of Jewry after the Chmielnicki pogroms fall prey to rabid superstition. The horrors are presented without that *nebbish* whine—with no pathos. There is to the tale the vividness, the intensity, of an eerily entertaining nightmare which overcomes the reader, oblivious of the author who keeps himself aloof throughout. In style and spirit, in that book as well as in the many others he would write in his lifetime—from *The Family Moskat* through *The Slave*, *The Spinoza of Market Street*, *The Manor*, and on and on—he is a storyteller like no other.

As for the elder brother I. J. Singer, after the period I have just spoken of his reputation in Yiddish went on to soar triumphantly—after one brief melodramatic fall. Critics vented their spleen on the war novel which followed *Perl* (and which appeared in English in my translation under the title *Blood Harvest*). Stung, he retorted with an absurd public "renunciation of Yiddish literature," a renunciation he later renounced with two splendid novels, *Yoshe Kalb* and *The Brothers Ashkenazi*. A stage version of *Yoshe Kalb*, starring Maurice Schwartz, became the biggest hit in the history of the Yiddish theater. It also led Shiya to move to New York, from where he was later able to provide a haven for Yitzhak from the oncoming Holocaust.

My mother, who had been the first of the Singer siblings to take up the pen, earned recognition as well under her married name of Esther Kreitman. Her autobiographical novel, *Der Shaidim Tantz* ("The Demons' Dance"), was published first in Warsaw and later came out in my English translation under the title *Deborah*. Long

after her death this novel would be resuscitated, thanks to the English writer Clive Sinclair, who would “discover” her while doing research for his excellent study, *The Brothers Singer*. Since then *Deborah* has gone on to a second life in Britain and the United States, and has also appeared in French and German, with a Danish version in the offing.

In 1938, my uncle Yitzhak made his English debut in an anthology I edited, *Jewish Short Stories of Today*. The compilation was—*mea culpa*—a family vehicle in disguise, with contributions signed by Isaac Bashevis Singer, I. J. Singer, Esther Kreitman, and my own pseudonym of Martin Lea, which I adopted for a London dockland novel, *The House of Napolitano*.

Not long after the publication of this anthology (to turn back again from literary matters to more personal ones), my own biography took a turn for the better when the Yiddish author A.M. Fuchs, in flight from post-*Anschluss* Vienna, came to our London apartment to pay a courtesy call on my mother, the writer. Accompanying him on the visit was his daughter Lola, to whom I surrendered my chastity, and who not long after became my wife and the mother of our daughter Hazel, born in the middle of World War II. While Lola was in labor, I, a civilian, sat in a second-floor office on Fleet Street in bombed-out London, monitoring German and French radio broadcasts.

THE year is 1945, the war is won, among the lost are six million Jewish men, women, and children. I am now working for the Reuters news agency as a roving correspondent in Europe and North Africa and am quartered, along with Lola, Hazel, and my mother, who is visiting from London, in the five-star Chatham Hotel near the Place de l’Opéra in Paris. One day my uncle Yitzhak arrives for a visit. Climbing the stairs and avoiding the elevator as is his wont, he reaches our landing, only to find my mother in hysterics, a malady which has come to afflict her in place of her previous bouts of epilepsy. Ordinarily, these fits must simply run their course to the point of exhaustion, but at his command, “Don’t upset the *kinder*!” she recovers her composure.

Converted to Zionism by my coverage of the Nazi war-crimes trials, I quit Reuters but stay on in Paris where Yitzhak looks me up whenever he is in town, and depletes my lapse from storytelling to journalism. “Write,” he urges me, “and get yourself a mistress who lives in an attic. The thrill, the expectancy you will feel on the upstairs climb, will turn you on.”

Did my uncle urge me to become a storyteller? Very well, I do now have a story to tell, and here it is. One day, I am hurrying along the Boulevard Bonne Nouvelle, meaning the Boulevard of Good Tidings (this is fact, not fiction), when I suddenly

hear the sound of an odd but somehow familiar name—the name “Jambul”—or do I simply imagine having heard it? I stop short in the busy throng and catch sight of a short, stocky man leaning against a shopwindow, wearing a trilby hat with its brim lowered just enough to leave one eye uncovered. And yes, he is speaking Yiddish to a companion. I go up to the stranger and ask whether he did in fact just say the name, “Jambul.” His watery eye in its drooping sac looks me over, and he nods assent.

Jambul is a place somewhere in Siberia, one of the new towns built by slave labor in Russia’s frozen north. My grandparents and my uncle Moshe were deported there from the Galician *shtetl* which became part of the Russian-occupied zone when Stalin and Hitler partitioned Poland in 1939. At the end of the war my mother, living in London, received three postcards from her mother in Jambul informing her that Bathsheva and Moshe were there together. To the name of Pinhas Menahem, her husband, my grandmother had appended the Hebrew initials denoting “of blessed memory,” but where and how he died she did not say. There was never a fourth postcard.

“Were you in Jambul?” I ask the watery-eyed stranger, who again nods in assent. “I have an uncle Moshe Singer who is living there with his mother Bathsheva. Did you happen to meet them?”

“You *had* an uncle Moshe Singer,” the stranger half-chortles, half-snarls. “The *shmoyger* [nincompoop] didn’t have the gumption to get organized, so he let himself starve and freeze to death. Did his wife hate him? Oh my, how she hated him! Children? No children. His mother? When I left, she was still around, but not for long, I guess.”

I do not believe in Satan, but there he stands, incarnate, with only one watery eye showing from beneath the turned-down brim of his trilby. I do not believe in predestination, but how else am I to account for these ill tidings received that day on the misnamed Boulevard Bonne Nouvelle? I walk away, blaming my grandmother Bathsheva for the death of my uncle Moshe, my namesake, and for my own birth.

Uncle Yitzhak, when I tell him of this encounter, listens with bowed head. The muscles of his gaunt face register a tremor. His lips move for words uttered in silence.

MANY years later my uncle Yitzhak comes to visit us in Tel Aviv, where we are now living and where we have an apartment on Hayarkon Street overlooking the Mediterranean. He inspects the oil paintings done in two very different styles by Lola and Hazel, lingering over and finally accepting as a gift one of Hazel’s canvases depicting a bearded Jew brooding over an empty chessboard. The mood of this last visit is a tender one, but the idyll is soon to come to an abrupt, grotesque end.

Some months after this I receive an unexpected phone call. To my surprise, Yitzhak is in Tel Aviv again, staying at the Park Hotel, and he wishes me to present myself the following morning at nine o'clock sharp to start work on a joint translation of his newly completed novel. I arrive punctually but have been preceded by Yitzhak's son, Yisrael Zamir—a reminder that my uncle is also a father.

On my entry Yitzhak motions me to a chair and begins reading aloud from the manuscript resting on his lap. As he reads, sentence by sentence, my job is to translate aloud into English without losing the Yiddish flavor. Having no notion of what the next sentence is to be, let alone what story is about to unfold, I begin to flounder, whereupon Bashevis snaps at me, "Simple, simple, keep it simple!"—even as he keeps taking down the sentences I dictate one by one. This goes on for fully two hours, at which point Yisrael Zamir, cooling his heels and totally ignored all this time, approaches, looms over his seated father, and snarls: "Now I see how you came to write *The Slave*!"

The next day Uncle Yitzhak comes to my apartment unannounced. He sits down at the foot of a couch and, head lowered, hands compressed between his knees, begins brooding. After a longish interval he pronounces judgment: "Your mother was a madwoman." I have a delayed reaction, but a violent one. The following day my uncle is waiting for me outside the Park Hotel where he is being interviewed in Hebrew by a woman journalist and I walk past him without a greeting. The grimace of pained astonishment distorting his face reminds me of my mother on her deathbed, swinging around aghast to draw her very last breath.

Thinking back on it now, I am a fool for having broken with my uncle Yitzhak. In spite of everything he did dedicate a novel to his sister, though the dedication managed to get her name slightly wrong (Minda Esther, instead of Hinde Esther), a misprint which he attributed to her *shaidim*—her demons. After all this was over, Yitzhak's wife and ideal life-companion Alma, who knew enough to treat him as a storyteller first and last,

and only incidentally (and discreetly) as a husband, gently remonstrated with me. She wrote me a letter explaining that when Yitzhak said wild things he was merely rehearsing possible themes for a story.

THE warring personalities inhabiting my uncle Yitzhak's slight frame enriched the compositions, the harmonic flights, of the storyteller Isaac Bashevis Singer. Those literati who foretold, when Yitzhak was still up a tree, that he would "dig into himself" to tap to the full his latent storytelling gifts overlooked the streak of shyness in his makeup which inhibited self-portrayal. More's the pity, for his was a truly fascinating character.

Those same literati were as wrong as wrong could be in their forecast of an oncoming storm, a cloudburst of Yitzhak's seething resentment, even outright hatred, against his elder brother Shiya. In the event, Yitzhak maintained a compulsive, lifelong posture of worshipfulness toward Shiya, publicly, demonstratively, in and out of season, referring to him as "my master." Here was an enigma, behavior so utterly unlike his customary self or selves—whatever the complexity of his character, submissiveness was no part of it—as to suggest a case of hypnosis. Far-fetched? Perhaps, though ultimately Yitzhak did see fit to come out with a confession that not until the lamented death of his senior brother did he feel altogether free, "free as a bird," to spread his literary wings.

That Yitzhak Bashevis himself exerted hypnotic powers, I can attest, and so surely can many others who found his presence spellbinding. That he himself should have been charmed by Shiya, the melancholy Shiya, and have trod so warily in order never, never to hurt him, was just one of those anomalies that go to make up the turning twisted web of life, and also the novels and short stories of Isaac Bashevis Singer.

My uncle Yitzhak was not a believer in the betterment of the human species. He voiced his irreproachable philosophy, uttered his ultimate *mot juste*, over that stinking hard-boiled egg in a sweet-smelling pinewood forest in Poland: "Such, yes, such is life."

# China on the Rise

*Charles Horner*

THERE are no “declinists” in China. There may be many Chinese who see in the country’s course over the last ten years much to lament. There may be those who treasure the older Maoist views and who condemn the “consumerism” and “materialism” which are replacing collectivism—and which threaten their privileges. Certainly the octogenarians who run the country worry a good deal about developments which threaten *their* privileges—and their control. And there are many others who cannot wait for the same octogenarians to pass so that China can proceed to its next modernization—democracy. But in the things that have mattered most for the past century and a half—the survival of the country, its wealth, its power, its standing, its face—China’s fundamental relationship to the rest of the world may finally be turning, *re*-turning, as it were, to a condition more in keeping with the traditional Chinese view of the appropriate international pecking order.

Much of this has to do with the collapse of the Soviet empire. For all its unsettling implications, not least its discrediting of Communism as an intellectual and political doctrine, the dissolution of the Soviet Union resolved the Sino-Soviet rivalry in China’s favor. Where reports from Russia and the other successor republics of the old Soviet Union describe uncertainty, civic crisis, and economic near-chaos, China is into the post-Communist era with a vengeance, striking all who pay attention to it as busy and energetic and purposeful.

Furthermore, for all the unpredictability introduced into political affairs by the post-Communist scrambling of world power relations, there is something in this new situation which resonates with traditional Chinese statecraft. In the end, as the Chinese have always seen it, one prevails because of superior stratagem, not because of superior power. In the great triangular contest involving China, the Soviet Union, and the United States, China was to “sit on the mountain and watch the tigers fight.” Now, with one of these barbarian superpowers in a state of collapse, and the other in an apparent state of depression,

have not Chinese patience and foresight been vindicated?

WHILE Westerners should never forget that the Chinese are seriously given to such musings, the main element in China’s new security and prominence is the remarkable performance of its economy. In a world worried by slow economic growth, and on a continent now famous for rapid economic expansion, China’s policies of the last ten years are starting to tell. In 1991, the country’s gross national product grew by 7 percent, industrial production by 14; the comparable figures for the first half of 1992 are 11 and 18. The CIA tells us that the Chinese are also building their bank balances, holding now some \$40 billion in foreign hard currency, about equal to our own holdings. And China now runs a trade surplus of about \$13 billion with the United States, second only to that of Japan.

These figures can be misleading and sobering at the same time. They are misleading in that China’s total output is still but a tenth of ours, even though its population is almost five times as large. The Achilles heel of the Chinese economy is what economists call per-capita production, woefully low in China, in the neighborhood of \$500 (as compared with about \$20,000 in the U.S., \$9,000 in Singapore, \$6,000 in Taiwan, and \$5,000 in South Korea). Still, in a country with 1.2 billion *capita*, small individual advances, when multiplied, quickly boost the aggregate. Hence the sobering aspect. Even at something less than its current growth rate, China’s gross domestic product could readily quadruple in the next twenty years, with plenty of slack left over.

Naturally, one cannot say whether China will stick to its present course, but we do know that it can if it wants to, and that recent public political displays indicate it still does. It is not only that the regime now understands that capitalist policies work and Maoist ones do not; it also has the added capacity to build on the prior economic successes of peoples in the region with close kinship to China proper. Hong Kong investors, for example, are putting billions into projects throughout China.

Even its political rival Taiwan cannot resist the gravitational attraction of an ever more massive

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Chinese economy. Conservative estimates place Taiwan's investments in China at some \$4 billion, with the actual amount probably much higher. There may already be about \$10-billion worth of trade each year between these supposed enemies. And the industrious Taiwanese now control the largest single hoard of hard currency in the world, more than \$80 billion of it, with additional investment opportunities close at hand.

For good measure there is a growing appreciation of the economic influence of the 50 million or so overseas Chinese—ethnic Chinese living outside China—who are a powerful commercial and financial force, especially in Southeast Asia. "Worldwide," the *Economist* reports, "the overseas Chinese probably hold liquid assets (not including securities) worth \$1.5 trillion-\$2 trillion. For a rough comparison, in Japan, with twice as many people, bank deposits in 1990 totalled \$3 trillion." Surely, China proper will provide opportunities for economic incentive and ethnic solidarity if, as they say, present trends continue.

Finally, there is the intriguing situation of the Chinese people's own savings at home. This past summer, there were accounts of riots in the southeast China city of Shenzhen, where more than 500,000 people showed up to buy applications for purchasing shares in a dozen new offerings. Three hundred bank offices, where the warrants were up for sale, were besieged by the avid investors. This is a boisterous—and exaggerated—manifestation of the simple fact that demand for investment opportunities far exceeds the supply, but it also suggests that the general population has an intuitive grasp of the desirability of recycling the income gains of recent years back into further economic expansion. The regime is clearly interested in encouraging that impulse, even if more than a few instances of bubble and burst accompany the introduction of "people's capitalism" into China.

THE rise of China as a commercial and trading power, a magnet for investment, a major purchaser of goods and services in world markets, certainly creates strains, but nothing that we are not accustomed to. We have been through it before in the case of Japan and the other Asian "dragons." With the application of minimal good sense, everyone ends up richer than he was before. But there is also the relationship among economic power, political presence, and strategic influence, and here the consequences may not be so benign or so easily managed.

People do different things with their money. Thus, for some years now, we have awaited the emergence of Japan as a stronger political and strategic force in the world, reflecting its amazing economic rise. Indeed, not only were we unnerved by predictions that our own country would be gobbled up by Japanese financiers, we were also alerted to prepare ourselves for a kind of *Pax*

*Nipponica* in Asia. That neither prediction has come true is a reminder that the Japanese, like other peoples, can remain self-absorbed, and that national aggrandizement can be as much a function of temperament as of capacity.

There are, however, many indications that China, still but an economic pygmy compared to Japan, is of a disposition to translate its limited gains into international influence. China, unlike Japan, is a major participant in the international arms trade. It exports nuclear technology to strategically sensitive third-world countries like Iran and Pakistan, and it has sold long-range missiles to Saudi Arabia. China is also an arms importer, especially of weapons which allow it to extend its military reach. The Chinese are reported to be negotiating for the purchase of an aircraft carrier from cash-hungry Ukraine, and have already taken delivery of high-performance fighter aircraft from Russia. Over the next several years, they will acquire the ability to refuel fighters in flight.

Along with all this, China has become increasingly assertive in territorial disputes in its adjacent waters, especially in consolidating its claims to islands hundreds of miles offshore in the South China Sea, reputed to sit atop substantial petroleum reserves.

Also within its own bailiwick, China has established diplomatic relations with South Korea, and in addition retains and exploits an important psychological advantage over Japan, which translates itself into an ability to draw on huge Japanese financial resources while continuing to cower and to render perpetually contrite the government in Tokyo. This is part and parcel of the "elder brother-younger brother" relationship of pre-modern times, an insurmountable barrier to any real *Pax Nipponica* in Asia—even aside from China's nuclear forces.

Moreover, in the larger sense, China is neither uncomfortable nor unfamiliar with the standing of Great Power. It has long enjoyed the trappings in the United Nations, as one of five permanent members of the Security Council, and its aura in the world has, for the past generation, far exceeded its real economic and military weight.

Now, none of these things, nor even all of them together, necessarily bespeak a China wildly ambitious or dangerously bellicose. But they do suggest a China that is, at the least, of an imperial mind, prepared to reoccupy the space in Asia vacated by a defunct Soviet Union, a withdrawing United States, and a reticent Japan. And such a mind can only be strengthened by other intangibles, especially a rediscovery and redefinition of things "Chinese," a new respect for them, congenial to both Chinese and Westerners.

ABOUT 30 years ago, when the Soviet and Chinese Communist parties were stepping up their feud over the proper interpretations of Marxist and Leninist doctrine,

the Chinese claimed the intellectual leadership of the revolutionary Left. The power of Chairman Mao's ideas alone was to substitute for other, more traditional, reckonings of power. By the late 1960's and early 1970's, the Chinese had managed to scare a goodly number of the world's chanceries with their notions of "people's war" and "national liberation"—strategies, in other words, for poor and backward countries to turn themselves into rich and powerful ones, thereby transforming the entire world order in the bargain. It is a mark of the upheavals of a generation, therefore, to note that the global ideological relevance of today's China is as an exemplar of capitalism and, even more, of the power of venerable Chinese tradition.

To any student of China and of China's view of itself in modern times, it is startling that the salvation of backward countries and peoples (and even some advanced ones, too) should now be so widely thought to lie in a rediscovery of the Confucian ethos—the very thing that was once seen as an obstacle to progress by all modern-minded Chinese, whether liberal reformers or thoroughgoing radicals. Lawrence Harrison, who has written on the relationship between cultural values and secular success, offers what are now quite typical opinions:

The economies that grew fastest between 1965 and 1990 were those of Japan, Taiwan, Korea, Singapore, and Hong Kong. Though these countries differ significantly, all are strongly influenced by the Confucian ethos, which emphasizes precisely the values that have suffered erosion in America. It is an ethos strikingly similar to the Protestant ethic, the well-spring of our own value system.

The Confucian ethos looms now as a model not only for personal character but also for social organization. Again, Lawrence Harrison:

For many American conservatives, "bloated" government is the problem. For many liberals, "greedy" business is the problem. Yet there is no solution to the social and fiscal distress we face—in our homes, in our cities, in budgets at all levels of government, and in our universities—without a dynamic economy. As the Confucian societies remind us, that depends on a marriage of effective government with vigorous entrepreneurship and business excellence.

These are not the attributes one used to associate with China or with societies under its cultural sway. Yet we are suddenly confronted with the increasing appeal of a kind of Sinified authoritarianism—best exemplified for the moment by Singapore—which makes the trains run on time and the trade surpluses mount up. As Nicholas Kristof, the *New York Times* correspondent in Beijing, writes:

Singapore not only has very few street protests; it has a cleanliness and orderliness that critics find dreary and antiseptic. . . . There is no

pornography, no extreme poverty, little corruption, and not much spitting or littering in public.

All this is a far cry from an earlier generation's clichés. Then, Confucius was the butt of "he-say" jokes, the typical Chinese business was a laundry or a restaurant, and China itself was either a utopian fantasyland for alienated radicals or the home of exotic religious creeds and offbeat aesthetic experiences for the intellectually disoriented. In the more distant past, Westerners may have been fascinated by Chinese philosophy and Chinese governance, but ours seems to be the first time a Sinic way of doing things is widely heralded in the West as practically transferable.

ON THE other hand, it remains a cliché that—as one American analyst writes—"the critical question determining the shape of the world as we head for a new century" is the relationship among America, Germany, and Japan. Yet in the great coming clash of capitalisms, is not China as well-positioned for the next twenty years as a Japan whose current economic stresses may signal the reaching of its natural limits, or as a Europe unable to resolve intracontinental ethnic, economic, political, and—most recently—monetary and financial stresses? What should China make of *these* developments? And what weight should Americans give to the potential of China proper, and of a more cohesive Sinic bloc, in our own speculations about the new century?

Curiously—and rather unimaginatively, in fact—the answer so far seems to be "not much." Not only is there little apparent consideration of the strategic significance of China in the new world order, but the focus seems to be entirely on the fragilities of China's arrangements. The leadership is seen as pressured on many fronts—the appearance of regional disparities in the economy; huge internal population movements as rural workers leave the countryside for booming urban centers; nepotism and peculation as the current leaders try to secure privileged circumstances for their children and grandchildren; the demonstrated incapacity of a repressive regime to balance economic advance with concomitant requirements for political liberalization. Beyond all that, the ruling Communist gerontocracy has more than the traditional succession problems of regimes of its type, for even its murderous methods have not weakened the rising generation's interest in political democratization and in human rights.

From this perspective, things are likely to evolve in a way which will make China ever more prosperous, yet less consequential in political and strategic terms. China will become a gigantic Switzerland, earning lots of money but not disturbing the adjacent world as it goes about its business.

Certainly a plausible case can be made for this view. After all, when one looks at contemporary China, one finds the linguistic and institutional paraphernalia of Communism to be in a somewhat confused state. By most reckonings, over half the economy is in private hands, with more to follow. The regime's ideological pretensions have also disappeared: it is no longer much given to grand pronouncements about world affairs, and is certainly no longer engaged in the business of building "people's armies" in different countries designed to wage revolutionary warfare. (China's man at the Security Council nowadays even wears an ordinary suit and tie instead of a Mao jacket, his sole sartorial concession to the old style being his eyeglass frames—dark above, clear plastic below, *a là* Mrs. Mao.) And brutal though they may be, the regime's methods at home are as nothing compared to the mass slaughters of the high Maoist periods, especially those of the late 1950's and the late 1960's.

So perhaps Communism in China really is withering away, to be superseded by some softer, albeit authoritarian, regime—like that, precisely, of Singapore (about which Deng Xiaoping himself has reportedly said: "We should learn from this experience and we should do a better job than they do").

AS BENIGN as this trend has been and may be, it is nonetheless already creating the basis for a new kind of antagonism between China and the world, and between the Chinese and ourselves especially. On the face of it, this is not what we would expect. Traditionally, we have thought of ourselves as friends of China, and it was only its capture by Communism, its alliance with the Soviets, and its support of world revolution which brought us into conflict.

There were, of course, bitter arguments about the true danger to us of any of these Chinese acts. Those who purported to know the most about the new China—professional Sinologists—were almost wholly of the view that the threat posed by a Communist China was woefully exaggerated and, in any case, should be coped with through greater contact and less direct criticism. Even many of those appalled by the Maoist experiment argued for better relations—for playing the China card.

But the Soviet Union, object of such strategic manipulations, is now gone, and the pragmatist's justification for warmer relations is now gone along with it. The ideological justification for the muting of criticism is also gone—or at least going; for as China continues to move to the

"Right," its former apologists seem to have less use for it.

Indeed, it is interesting that though the worst excesses of the regime in the past could not quite provoke heartfelt outrage, there is from time to time a nostalgia for those old days, masked as criticism of today's abuses. Take a recent page-one account in the *New York Times*. "With Focus on Profits, China Revives Bias Against Women," reads the headline, and "As Communist Ethics Yield to Capitalism, Women Lose Out," reads the bold-face synopsis. These things are happening, writes the correspondent, "as Chinese society focuses more on profit than on equality, and as Communist morality loses its influence."

This is, perhaps, an unusually egregious example, but it says something about the nature of the growing criticism of China among the intelligentsia throughout the West. Such sentiments seem destined to insinuate themselves into the historiography of China's past twenty years. Inevitably, the prior era of "higher purpose" will be contrasted to the rampant materialism that follows. In this, Deng Xiaoping is apt to become China's Reagan, presiding officer over a decade of greed, of unbounded consumption, and certainly of greater air pollution. "Socialism with Chinese characteristics," if it succeeds in catapulting China into the first rank of the world's economic and political powers, will be no socialism at all.

Willy-nilly, then, we seem to have in the making a new basis for Sino-American antagonism, something different from the "yellow peril" which led us to enact the infamous Chinese exclusion acts, and different, yet again, from Maoist totalitarianism and its self-proclaimed international pretensions, which led us to make war in Korea and Indochina.

But whether grounded in political predilection or hard-headed analysis, our changing sense of China must now, for the first time in a century and a half, be made to fit with a China which actually is powerful and influential. In Maoist lingo, China is poised for its strategic counter-offensive in the world, having now recognized that the methods Mao himself used to begin it in 1950 were a false start. In the disputes that went on in China during these decades—between "radicals" and "pragmatists," between "reds" and "experts"—we used to hope for the victory of the moderates, the less ideological, the more practical, those more aware of the transforming power of free-fire capitalism. We must now begin to think about the consequences of living with what we have wished for, the fulfillment of another of those proverbial Chinese curses.

# On Reading for Pleasure Again

## *A Tribute to the Library of America*

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Norman Podhoretz

THERE are times when I find it almost impossible to read for pleasure. Of course, I read for a living: as an editor, I spend much of my working day with manuscripts, galley proofs, newspapers, and other magazines; and many evenings and weekends are consumed by books I have to read in order to keep up. Some of this reading gives me pleasure, but it is not the kind of pleasure I once regularly got from literature—and still do during those precious hours when I can summon the necessary concentration. I know people as old as I am, and older, who can still focus intensely at will. A few of them even tell me that their ability to concentrate improves with age. Not so with me. Once upon a time, I could lose myself entirely in a difficult book for hours at a stretch. Yet now that I am into my sixties, my mind wanders more easily than it used to, and my spirit seems even more subject to fatigue than my bones.

For me, the answer cannot be “light” reading. I have never had much of a taste for detective or mystery novels, and most popular fiction sets my teeth on edge. On occasion—usually while working on a book of my own—I have managed to distract myself with authors like Elmore Leonard or Irwin Shaw, but after the fifth or sixth volume, Leonard begins to pall and Shaw begins to bore.

Curiously enough, though, I have an appetite for precisely such material on television. The same detective or mystery stories which fail to engage my interest on paper are capable of keeping me occupied when translated to the screen; and the type of popular novel I simply cannot abide between covers is more than good enough in its television incarnation for whiling away a restless evening at home.

Why this should be so I have never been able to figure out. Perhaps it has to do with the lesser demands I make on television (and the movies too) as compared with the written word. Or possibly some subtle aesthetic principle is at work

here. But whatever the reason, when my inability to concentrate deprives me of the pleasure of reading, it is to television that I usually turn.

Or at least it was until I began dipping into the Library of America.

I KNEW about what would eventually become the Library of America long before it was ever born. If paternity can be assigned to any single person, the father of the project would have to be identified as the critic Edmund Wilson. It was not, however, from Wilson that I first heard the idea discussed, but rather from an old college friend, Jason Epstein.

As the boy wonder of American publishing in the 1950's, Epstein had invented the quality paperback. Among the other titles in his Anchor Books series he had included a number of Wilson's out-of-print works, thereby introducing them to a new generation of readers and helping to make Wilson more prominent than he had been since his own younger days, in the 20's and 30's. Now, egged on by Wilson, Epstein in the late 50's began turning his ambitious attentions from the inexpensive to the luxury end of the book market, and specifically to the Editions de la Pléiade in France.

What the Pléiade series did was put out definitive editions of the complete works of the classic French writers, in compact volumes that were printed on very thin but opaque and durable paper and sold at a price that, while not low, was by no means too high for the ordinary book buyer.

That America needed something like the Pléiade series was clear. In those days, sets of Mark Twain seemed to be ubiquitous—I believe they had been given out as premiums for one thing or another—but only a relentless and indefatigable collector with a lot of money could get hold of a complete set of, say, the works of Herman Melville. (The only one ever published had been done in England in the 1920's, and had long been out of print.) The New York edition of the novels of Henry James could be found in some of the better secondhand bookstores, but if they were in

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decent condition, they were invariably very expensive. So too with Nathaniel Hawthorne's novels. (I cannot remember how much I paid for my own used set of Hawthorne, but since I bought it when I was young and poor, it must have been relatively cheap; and today it is literally falling apart.) Even a major contemporary author like William Faulkner was hard to come by. When Faulkner won the Nobel Prize in 1949, all but two or three of his books were out of print.

Never having been in the market for such non-fictional works of American literature as Francis Parkman's histories, I cannot be sure whether they were as scarce as the classical novels. But I have good reason to suspect that they were. Only about ten years ago, when I set out to write an essay about Henry Adams, a much better-known writer than Parkman, I was unable to lay my hands on a copy of what he regarded as his most important work, his nine-volume *History of the United States During the Administrations of Jefferson and Madison*.

Nor, I also suspect, was the situation much better with Thomas Jefferson's own writings, or with those of such other marvelous writers among the American Presidents as Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant. And while it was easy enough to get hold of William James's masterpiece, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, most of his other books were either out of print or, again, accessible only to well-heeled treasure-hunting collectors.

WHAT was curious about this state of affairs was that it persisted even as more and more attention was being paid to, and more and more respect accorded, American literature in the universities and among the critics. When I was an undergraduate at Columbia in the years immediately after World War II, there were only a few courses in American literature, and it was possible to graduate with a major in English without taking any of them. (I took one, and a short one at that.) The general attitude was that, with a few notable exceptions, the American novelists and poets were vastly inferior to those of England, France, and Russia. Therefore anyone interested in literature as such was better off devoting himself to the great Europeans, while consulting the Americans mainly for what they had to teach about the nature of the native soul.

I still think there was some truth in this judgment, but there was also a good deal of unlovely self-denigration in it, and too great a readiness to acquiesce in the assumption of European superiority. However, all this was beginning to change even while I was still at Columbia, as critics like Lionel Trilling, Alfred Kazin, and Richard Chase produced books and essays pressing the claims of American literature and making the case for its intrinsic interest and importance.

There are those who believe that this newly

affirmative attitude toward American literature was a product of the cold war. (The same charge has been lodged in connection with the great prestige of the abstract-expressionist painters, who of course were centered in New York.) Here too there is an element of truth, in the sense that a new curiosity about American culture was bound to accompany the rise of the United States to the position of leader of the West against the Communist world. But if the charge is meant to suggest that cynicism and/or chauvinism were at work in this phenomenon, it is palpably absurd. Indeed, it was not for its celebration of America and American life, but precisely for its radicalism—its severely critical stance toward the society from which it emerged—that this literature was most often esteemed.

Be that as it may, it is no wonder that under such circumstances the wish should have developed to make the classic American authors more easily accessible than they now were or had ever been. The only wonder is that it took so long to get the project going.

A large part of the problem was, not surprisingly, money. Epstein would have liked nothing better than to publish the American Pléiade himself. But unlike Wilson, who imagined that the project was commercially viable, Epstein knew that it would require a much heavier advance outlay than any commercial publisher could afford to risk. He also understood that it would take many years before such an investment would begin to pay off, even on the doubtful assumption that it ever would. Since neither the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) nor the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) had yet come into existence, the foundations were left as the only potential source of support.

So, in the early 60's, it was to them that Epstein turned, armed with letters from Wilson and, in due course, with endorsements from such other eminent literary figures as Lionel Trilling, W.H. Auden, and Allen Tate.

Nothing, however, came of this effort, and by 1968 (the Endowments having been established by then), Wilson was in a rage. In a letter to the *New York Review of Books*, he wrote:

I have for a long time had the project of getting out the American classics in a series similar to the Pléiade editions published by Gallimard in France: complete works of the important authors, selections from the less important, well but not pretentiously edited, well printed on thin paper and not impossibly priced. . . . I was given not long ago to understand that a sum of money had been allotted for my project by the National Endowment for the Humanities. My supporters and I were ready to go into action. But then I was told that the project had been "tabled" for reasons that were not explained, and that the Modern Language Association had somehow

succeeded in having this money assigned to themselves. The next news I had was that more . . . stupid academic editions were being got under way.

But as things turned out, the Modern Language Association (MLA) did not succeed in hijacking Wilson's project. In 1979, in one of his last acts as president of the Ford Foundation, McGeorge Bundy made up for the harm he had done earlier in his tenure (especially in trying to decentralize the New York City school system), and now put everyone who cares about America and its literature forever in his debt, by providing seed money to Wilson's "supporters."<sup>1</sup> The NEH, evidently not as much in thrall to the MLA as Wilson had imagined, also chipped in, and the Library of America was born. Three years later, in 1982, the first few volumes were published; and now, after a full decade, the total stands at 61, with many more to come.

WILSON died in 1972 and thus did not live to see the realization of his project. Unpredictable as he was, and given on occasion to cranky and perverse judgments, there is no telling for certain what he would have said about the Library of America. On the other hand, it is almost impossible to imagine that he would have been anything less than absolutely delighted. For the Library of America is as close to the kind of thing he envisaged as it could conceivably be.

To begin with, these books are, in the words he used to describe the *Pléiade* series, "beautifully produced and admirably printed, thin-paper volumes, ranging from 800 to 1,500 pages." (In fact, the Library of America goes *Pléiade* 100 pages better, with its top limit reaching 1,600, and an all-series average of 1,200.) The Library of America does not yet cover the complete works of all the classic American novelists and poets, but it intends to do so and is already well on its way. Thus far, it has produced three volumes of James Fenimore Cooper, two of Hawthorne, three of Melville, one of Walt Whitman, five of Mark Twain, two of Edgar Allan Poe, five of Henry James, one of Theodore Dreiser, two of Edith Wharton, and two of Faulkner.

In addition to complete sets of the major writers, Wilson also wanted individual volumes devoted to "many writers of not necessarily the first importance, but such as are often included in the *Pléiade* series." As it happens, none of the writers he himself listed has yet been so honored by the Library of America. But one of them, Kate Chopin, is scheduled to be, and many others "of not necessarily the first importance" (Washington Irving, Harriet Beecher Stowe, William Dean Howells, Frank Norris, Jack London, Stephen Crane, Willa Cather, Eugene O'Neill, Flannery O'Connor, Sinclair Lewis, etc.) have already been

published. Furthermore, Henry Adams, a collected edition of whose works Wilson advocated (even though Adams was not one of his own favorites), is already represented by three big volumes; two of these contain the whole of the *History* which was originally published in nine volumes and which I was unable to find back in 1982.

Thirdly, the Library of America has obeyed Wilson's injunction that "almost everything should be edited anew," and that the editing should be unobtrusive. The editor of each volume has tried to establish an authoritative text without bothering the general reader with more than a minimal amount of apparatus. Notes are at the back and mostly devoted to explaining topical and other obscure references. And perhaps most useful of all, each volume contains a detailed chronology of the author's life and career, which in many cases amounts to an excellent capsule biography.

Finally, Wilson hoped that the series would be reasonably priced—and so it has been, from a low of \$27.50 per volume to a high of \$35.00. (Books can also be bought for less through a subscription plan.)<sup>2</sup>

There is one respect in which the Library of America differs somewhat from Wilson's prescription. He placed most of his emphasis on fiction and poetry, whereas over a third of the first 61 volumes are memoirs and works of history, philosophy, and even politics. In addition to Adams and Parkman, there are Jefferson, Lincoln, and Grant, as well as Benjamin Franklin, William Tecumseh Sherman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, William James, and W.E.B. Du Bois. Two whole volumes are also given over to the critical essays of Henry James, and many works of nonfiction by Mark Twain, Norris, Cather, and Crane are featured along with their novels and stories.

But it is hard to believe that Wilson, who so often paid serious attention in his own essays to such works, would have objected to their inclusion in the American *Pléiade*. All in all, then, the Library of America can be said to have fulfilled his wishes to a truly extraordinary degree.

INDEED, it has done better than that. When Wilson first began pushing for an American *Pléiade*, he thought that the only serious obstacle would be the dryasdust professors of the MLA "whose lack of taste and dis-

<sup>1</sup> These now included, along with Epstein, two scholars, Daniel Aaron of Harvard and Richard Poirier of Rutgers, as well as a textual scholar, G. Thomas Tanselle, of the Guggenheim Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> Both individual volumes and subscriptions can be ordered from The Library of America, 14 East 60th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022-1006. The series is also distributed to bookstores by Viking. Unfortunately—and scandalously—the supply in stores (at least so far as I have been able to tell from a spot check) is either thin or nonexistent.

crimination . . . has come largely to dominate the academic field of American literature." Little did he know how relatively harmless these old-style academic pedants were. As compared with the MLA of today, whose annual conventions notoriously feature lectures and panel discussions on topics like "Clitoral Imagery and Masturbation in Emily Dickinson" and "De-Sublimating the Male Sublime: Autoerotics, Anal Erotics, and Corporeal Violence in Melville and William Burroughs,"<sup>3</sup> the MLA against which Wilson railed was the very model of taste and discrimination. And as compared with the faculties of literature in today's colleges and universities, which are balkanized along racial, ethnic, and sexual lines—with each fiefdom elevating its own indigenous authors with little regard for any consideration other than ideology, and with half of the professors in an MLA survey saying that they do not think it essential to teach Hawthorne, Thoreau, or Melville—the academics Wilson despised were selfless and disinterested servants of literary and aesthetic standards.

In this new cultural climate of today, the very idea of establishing a literary "canon" has become so incendiary that the people running the Library of America<sup>4</sup> prudently avoid using the word. Yet they are not afraid to speak plainly of the "acknowledged classics," and they do not hesitate to name names, promising without further elaboration on the back of every dust jacket to give us "All of Melville, all of Hawthorne, all of Henry James, and Emerson and Thoreau and Mark Twain. . . ." A canon if there ever was one.

But if the Library of America has not been deterred from acting upon the idea of a canon, it has not altogether resisted the related pressures coming from the same cultural climate to practice literary affirmative action. To be sure, no ethnic quotas are in evidence. There are, for instance, no forthrightly Jewish writers here (come to think of it, there are no Jewish writers at all). And while a number of Irish names are present, they have clearly been chosen for reasons having nothing to do with their ethnic origin. More surprisingly, there are no openly homosexual works in the first 61 volumes. Walt Whitman is here not as a homosexual but as a poet (by which I mean that no collection of American literature is conceivable without him); and the same goes for Henry James and Melville, both of whom have lately been claimed by the gay-studies movement.

**W**OMEN and blacks are another matter. Although no effort to achieve statistical parity can be detected (seven of the first 61 volumes are by women, and three are by blacks), it is clear that there was a great eagerness to include representatives of these two groups. Otherwise, how explain the rush to put out minor 20th-century writers like O'Connor and Rich-

ard Wright when major figures like Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and John Dos Passos have not yet been published (though in time they all will be)?

Fortunately for the integrity of the series, American literature is rich in excellent writers who happen to be women. Hence in connection with them the Library of America will be able to practice affirmative action, not in the bad sense of filling a quota even if that involves lowering standards, but in the good sense of seeking out genuinely qualified candidates among previously excluded or overlooked groups.

This is not to say that the academic feminists are right in their charge that important women writers have been ignored in America (or anywhere else). No feminist movement or affirmative-action program was necessary to bring poets like Emily Dickinson and Marianne Moore (who are not yet part of the Library of America, but eventually will be) or such novelists as Edith Wharton and Willa Cather (who are already here) to our attention. Nevertheless, in the absence of a special effort to ensure a goodly proportion of women, chances are that we would have been given much less of Cather than the three beautiful volumes which have already been devoted to her.

There are, if truth be told, fewer black writers of this stature—a reality reflected in the fact that Du Bois (one volume) is the only other one besides Wright (two volumes) whose work has up till now been chosen. But as with the women, this is affirmative action in the good sense, since no lowering of standards was necessary to include Wright and Du Bois.

Where Wright is concerned, I must confess that I did not at first believe this. Yet rereading his novel, *Native Son*, as well as his autobiography, *Black Boy*—both of which are presented here for the first time in unexpurgated versions—has convinced me that he was a much better writer than I remembered (and that James Baldwin's famous youthful attack on him was overheated). As for Du Bois, no apologies or special explanations are necessary. He obviously belongs not only among the American social critics but among the American writers. (So does Frederick Douglass, who is already in the pipeline, and perhaps also Du Bois's great rival, Booker T. Washington.)

<sup>3</sup> No, I have not made these up. They are both papers which have been read at recent MLA conventions—and many more like them could be cited.

<sup>4</sup> Besides Aaron, Poirier, and Tanselle, who were present at the creation (Epstein dropped out in 1989), the Board of Directors consists of: Cheryl Hurley, President and Publisher; Benjamin Ordovery of the Hume Group; Warren J. Haas of the Council on Library Resources; Lawrence Hughes of the Hearst Trade Book Group; and Marianne McDonald of the University of California, Irvine. There is also a large Board of Advisers consisting mainly of prominent scholars and critics. All honor to them all.

Still, as with Willa Cather, I must in all honesty raise the question of whether Du Bois's claim would have been so obvious if not for the pressure to ensure at least some black representation. And I find myself wondering whether the same pressure will result in the unearthing of other black writers who will turn out to be better than I remember, or to have been unjustly forgotten by the literary world at large.

CERTAINLY this has been my experience with a fair number of the books by white males which I have now read or reread in Library of America editions. Of course, my critical judgment may have been influenced by the delight I take in the look and feel of these volumes. Everything about them is a pleasure—their convenient size (based, according to the designer, Bruce Campbell, on the “golden section,” a proportion that the ancient Greeks found to be most perfect<sup>5</sup>); their supple but sturdy bindings; the ease with which they open and stay open; their elegant typography; even their uniformly designed dust jackets, whose laminated finish is so voluptuously creamy to the touch that I, who normally hate reading a book with the dust jacket on, make a point of doing so with the Library of America.

Indeed, the inviting physical properties of these volumes have all by themselves helped turn me away from television and back to serious reading again. When I was young and avid, and penniless, I actually liked cheap editions, and I was snobbishly disdainful of luxurious bindings and fancy paper. Not any more. If anything, the works embodied in the Library of America format seem better than they did in the densely printed paperback or hard-cover editions in which for the most part I originally came upon them.<sup>5</sup> This applies not only to Richard Wright, but even to James and Dreiser, both of whom I have known well for more than forty years.

Incidentally, in a very influential essay, my old teacher Lionel Trilling—taking the kind of narrow position much more characteristic of another old teacher of mine, the English critic F.R. Leavis—juxtaposes Dreiser and James as alternative possibilities for American literature: Dreiser bad, James good. But I for one have always felt that Dreiser at his best—which is to say in *Sister Carrie* and even more in *An American Tragedy*—is in his own way as great a novelist as James.

If, revisited in the Library of America, some writers with whom I was already familiar seemed better than I remembered, others I had previously read only sketchily or not at all (partly because in my student days they were looked down upon as crude and in every other respect inferior to Hawthorne, Melville, and James) seemed better than I expected. Howells (whom Trilling bucked the fashion by defending) was one, Norris

another, Jack London a third. Even Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* turned out to be very much worth rereading (and Lewis himself turned out to be an elegant—yes, elegant—prose stylist).

The mention of Howells, Norris, London, and Lewis brings me back to the critical attitude toward America taken by most of its leading writers, at any rate since the end of the Civil War, and most insistently in the past hundred years. Reading them today, I can confirm that they did, just as everyone says, portray their own society as vulgar, philistine, materialistic, and puritanical. But having spent the past two decades and more defending this country against the same charges by the contemporary spiritual descendants of these writers, I was surprised to discover that the indictment, so hollow in its updated versions, still rings true in the original.

Perhaps I should not have been surprised. After all, the older writers were accurately describing the country they lived in, whereas their epigones seem not to have noticed that the country *they* live in is a very different place. Moreover, unlike the current crop, most of the older writers retained a degree of respect, affection, and even love for the world out of which they came. I am thinking here in particular of Willa Cather and Sarah Orne Jewett (the latter not yet in the Library of America, but soon to be) but also of Norris and London and even Sinclair Lewis (especially in *Main Street*, which is why it is superior to the less complex *Babbitt*, the other novel included in the Lewis volume).

Another point: thanks in good part to the ridicule heaped upon them by Lewis and the others, the businessmen and the boosters and the “solid citizens” of *Main Street* and *Babbitt*'s Zenith gradually lost their confidence. In time they even humbly gave way to the very people George F. Babbitt himself had denounced as “these blabmouth, fault-finding, pessimistic, cynical University teachers” and “the long-haired gentry who call themselves ‘liberals’ and ‘radicals.’ . . .” But now that we are living with the results of this profound shift in cultural power, can we really be so sure that Babbitt was wrong and his creator right? Is it really self-evident that the country is better off under the influence of today's enlightened cultural elites than it was when—again in Babbitt's words—

the ideal of American manhood and culture [wasn't] a lot of cranks sitting around chewing the rag about their Rights and Wrongs, but a God-fearing, hustling, successful two-fisted Regular Guy . . . who plays hard and works hard, and whose answer to his critics is a square-toed boot that'll teach the grouches

<sup>5</sup> However, I regret to report that the paperback editions of selected single works from the Library of America, which are being put out by Vintage Books, do not represent any great improvement over other quality paperbacks.

and smart alecks to respect the He-man and get out and root for Uncle Samuel, U.S.A!

How easy it was in 1922 to join with Sinclair Lewis in ridiculing this kind of talk; how easy it still is for some. But among the discoveries I have made in revisiting Lewis and the other novelists of the "social realist" school is that it is not so easy for me.

And a final observation. Lewis could not make enough fun of Babbitt's preference in literature, as in life, for "red-blooded He-men" and his contempt for "highbrows" (a word Babbitt uses promiscuously to cover any and all forms of pretentiousness or gentility). Yet the great irony is that when left-wing critics pushed Lewis himself, and even more so Dreiser, at the expense of Henry James, the criteria they applied were nothing more than a sophisticated transmutation of aesthetic Babbitttry. Perceiving this, I have now come to understand more fully why Trilling got so riled up against the partisans of Dreiser, who "oppose[d] crude experience to mind and establish[ed] Dreiser's value by implying that the mind which Dreiser's crude experience is presumed to confront and refute is the mind of gentility" supposedly represented by James.

FROM a strictly literary point of view, however, the great discoveries I have made are not so much in the novels reprinted by the Library of America as in the histories of Francis Parkman and the memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant.

To my own amazement, Parkman's *France and England in North America*, in two massive volumes adding up to some 3,000 pages, overcame

my difficulties of concentration and kept me riveted throughout (which is more than I can say for what I would guess was Parkman's model, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*). Among the other marvels of this lushly written chronicle of the struggle between France and England for control of the North American continent are its portrayals of the Indians. These passages, with their unflinching descriptions of torture and cannibalism, are all the more fascinating when read against the background of today's politically-correct pieties. And they have left me determined not only to tackle the third of the Library of America's Parkman volumes (consisting of *The Oregon Trail* and *The Conspiracy of Pontiac*) but also to make an assault on the two volumes of Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*.

Grant's *Memoirs* was another revelation. Although I knew that it had been much praised (by Edmund Wilson, for one), I had not expected it to be one of the great autobiographies. Its companion volume, Sherman's *Memoirs*, is not in the same league, but it is a wonderful book all the same.

I have no doubt that there are equally wonderful works still waiting for me in the many volumes already published by the Library of America which I have not yet had the time or the energy to take on—not to mention those in the pipeline. For this I am immensely grateful.

But putting it in such personal terms makes the case much too narrow. For what can and should be said about the Library of America is that it has grown into one of the glories of our civilization and one of the few cultural developments of our time about which one can feel unreservedly happy and unqualifiedly proud.

## George Ball's Latest Diatribe

Edward N. Luttwak

IN ITS confrontations with Israel of the last few years, the Bush administration attempted on more than one occasion to discredit not just the government of Israel but that country's entire reliability as an ally and, therefore, its worthiness to receive American support. Although it was a sharp departure from the rhetoric of previous administrations, the Bush/Baker depiction of Israel has not been without its advocates in American politics. Among them, the indefatigable George W. Ball may be the best known. A former Under Secretary of State (in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations), Ball has conducted a crusade of many years' duration against U.S. ties with Israel, and now with his son Douglas he has published a book, *The Passionate Attachment*,\* arguing his case at great length.

The title of the book is taken from George Washington's Farewell Address of 1796 (actually written by Alexander Hamilton, and that was 185 years before Peggy Noonan), to wit:

... a passionate attachment of one nation for another produces a variety of evils. Sympathy for the favorite nation, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary common interest in cases where no real common interest exists, and infusing into one the enmities of the other, betrays the former into a participation in the quarrels and wars of the latter without adequate inducement or justification . . . and it gives to ambitious, corrupted, or deluded citi-

zens (who devote themselves to the favorite nation) facility to betray or sacrifice the interests of their country without odium, sometimes even with popularity. [Emphasis added.]

That final point (not explicitly cited by the authors) is what has long riled George Ball the most: American Jews (ambitious? corrupted? deluded?) have suffered no odium, or insufficient odium, for having persistently advocated financial, military, and diplomatic support for their "favorite nation" of Israel. And that nation, according to the Balls, is especially unworthy, having attacked (Arabs), oppressed and persecuted (Palestinians), perpetrated nefarious plots and schemes (worldwide), and manipulated, exploited, and betrayed (the United States).

Israel, say the Balls, attacked the Arabs in 1948, 1956, 1967, 1982, and at various other times in between and since. Remarkably, they do not even concede 1948, Israel's War of Independence, as a defensive war, citing—as evidence for its putatively offensive character—a statement to that effect by a British diplomat, Harold Beeley, to the State Department's Loy Henderson. This, against sightings by all and sundry of Arab military forces advancing across the international border, the fall of outlying Jewish settlements to the attacks of Egyptian and Arab Legion forces, etc. The Arabs, to judge by their own enthusiastic declarations of the time, certainly *thought* they were invading. Was it a case of mass delusion on both sides (and by third-party observers, too), only now exposed by this book? Nor do the Balls pause to note, if only incidentally, what else is recorded, and very amply, of Beeley and Hender-

son in official archives, notably their own passionate attachment to the "Arabist" persuasion, and their passionate opposition to Zionism.

But even Beeley and Henderson are paragons of objectivity next to other sources cited incessantly by the Balls, notably the late Simcha Flapan, described here merely as "an Israeli publisher and author." That he was, but he was also a uniquely ambitious revisionist whose writings explain *all* the travails of the Middle East as the result of sinister Zionist machinations, with the curious result of reducing all Arab leaders to the role of passive victims, innocent but also quite inert. Flapan's Israel—which is also the Israel depicted by the Balls—is the ultimate superpower, *never* truly threatened, not even in 1948, but only pretending to be; never acting out of anxiety, but only in cold calculation.

According to the Balls, Israel employed Nazi methods against the Palestinians long before the 1982 massacre at Sabra and Shatila (perpetrated by Christian Arabs, but these, of course, were mere pawns). In fact, they compare the behavior of Israeli soldiers in 1948 with the behavior of German troops in Poland. As for Israel's response to the *intifada*, not much need be said: tear gas, poison gas—it is all gas, after all. And even when they are not behaving like Nazis, the Israelis are running guns, smuggling narcotics, or acting as ancillaries to mass-murder plots all over the world; to hear the Balls tell it, every Israeli selling guns in Panama or training dubious Colombian farmers is loyally acting under instructions from the Israeli government, and not—perish the thought—out to make money for himself.

WORST of all, however, is Israel's treatment of the United States. According to the Balls, Israel has

\* *The Passionate Attachment: America's Involvement with Israel, 1947 to the Present*. Norton, 382 pp., \$24.95.

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robbed the U.S. Treasury of many billions of dollars; it has systematically undermined U.S. foreign policy as far afield as Guatemala and, of course, throughout the Muslim world; it has stolen technology galore; and it has even attacked U.S. forces directly.

On this last point the Balls recall the air attack on the U.S. Navy's *Liberty* in the heat of the June 1967 war—"blatant murder," they declare. They are evidently unimpressed by the misidentification or "friendly-fire" episodes of the 1991 Gulf war, in which the offending U.S. forces had sensors far, far superior to the eyeball Mark I's of the Israeli crews who attacked the *Liberty*. The Balls obviously do not know that even a large U.S. flag is hardly a sufficient identification in the heat of battle, from thousands of yards away, in high-tempo operations. (In 1956, 1967, and most lethally 1982, the Israeli Air Force repeatedly bombed clearly marked Israeli troops, as all air forces sufficiently dynamic will do.)

But it is in the footnotes that the Balls really let themselves go, citing approvingly a claim that in 1982 Israeli intelligence knew that the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut would be attacked on October 23 by a suicide truck-bomber but deliberately failed to warn Washington, cynically choosing to let 241 Marines die to provoke anti-Arab feelings. When the same Shiite group also attacked an Israeli headquarters some days later, killing 60, did the Israelis also know it in advance? No doubt the Balls would explain that Israel deliberately failed to warn its own troops just to avoid probing questions about its prior knowledge of the attack on the Marines.

Not that the Balls make much of this episode—it is only a footnote, after all. But that is one example among many of their characteristic technique: repeating charges by others which most people properly regard as wild accusations, but each time preceded or followed by judicious comments in their own voice that give an air of reasonableness to the proceedings.

Much less subtle is their gross overloading of the case for the prosecution. Thus, in a two-page bookkeeping of all the costs of the Israel relationship to the U.S., the Balls include \$30.04 million that we are about to spend to build a long-planned Voice of America/Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty transmitter in Israel's Arava valley. Now that we can transmit to Russia from Moscow if we want to, the Arava transmitter is the sort of thing that gives bureaucratic idiocy a bad name. Wasteful the project certainly is, but it is also unwanted by Israel and very unpopular (it would wreck the tranquility of the country's prime wildlife patch), and the Rabin government must constantly explain to its public that it feels duty-bound to stick to a promise made to the White House—at the height of the Reagan cold war. In other words, the Balls present an Israeli *concession* to the U.S. as its exact opposite.

Nor do the Balls like to admit that Israel has had more than its share of uses over the years, from providing an anchorage to the Sixth Fleet (shown perversely as a *cost* in the Balls' ledger—e.g., "crew liberty=\$27.0 million"—as if it were safer to whore and drink in, say, Beirut), to the little matter of defeating Soviet weapons and strategic doctrine in 1956, 1967, 1973, and 1982, thus cutting down Soviet prestige in the one sector of human endeavor in which the Soviet Union could aspire to any prestige at all. In fact, deploying the techniques of the Balls in reverse, one could construct a decently plausible argument that attributes 100 percent of America's cold-war victory to Israel (1982 defeat of Soviet-built air defenses by Israeli Air Force leads to loud Soviet military demands for scientific-technical reforms; Gorbachev tries to modernize the USSR to meet military needs; and so forth through perestroika to Yeltsin).

ARE the Balls perchance anti-Semitic? One must assume that they are not. But they do not hesitate to rely on the say-so of people quite proud of their own hostility

to Jews. And they are charter members of that strange society of people who, while preemptively indignant at prospective accusations of anti-Semitism, dedicate themselves year after year to criticizing just one among the very many supporting relationships of the United States, despite the fact that the amounts we have given to Israel, substantial though they be, are peanuts compared to what we have spent to enrich and protect our trading rivals in Europe and Asia, some of whom are even now returning the favor by employing all manner of customs-house conspiracies to keep out U.S. exports.

The Balls may not be anti-Semitic, but they relentlessly depict one small country as the sum of human iniquity, in a world that has contemporaneously contained the likes of Stalin and Mao, the Khmer Rouge, Fidel Castro, and Saddam Hussein—not to speak of ordinary, garden-variety, U.S.-supported regimes such as Mubarak's Egypt, which deals with its own recurring *intifada* by swiftly machine-gunning hundreds of rioters at a clip. (In this sense, Israel, with its pathetic rubber bullets, is hopelessly out of phase with the Arab Middle East.)

The Balls may not be anti-Semitic, but they constantly criticize American Jewry for its lobbying efforts in behalf of Israel as if U.S. citizens were not concurrently lobbying to obtain favors for Armenia, Greece, Poland, and—at hefty fees—Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and a hundred other causes or money-grubbing interests both foreign and domestic. The Balls do not seem to have cottoned to the fact that every member of Congress is lobbied all the time—and mostly by *paid* lobbyists, out to secure favors for purely economic interests, for their own purely mercenary reasons. Compared to them, the Jews who spend their own money to seek help disinterestedly for Israel are an innocent lot, even if rudely insistent on occasion.

The Balls may not be anti-Semitic, but they depict the American Israel Public Affairs Commit-

tee (AIPAC), the main pro-Israel lobby, as more ruthless than the KGB in its best days, better organized than Japan's MITI, and richer than the Sultan of Brunei, he of the golden-domed, air-conditioned, 136-Rolls-Royce garage. True, AIPAC has been pretty effective at times, and just like the Sierra Club has a few scalps of unfriendly ex-Congressmen on its belt; but that is all. Next to the Godzilla that is the American Trial Lawyers Association, which year after year successfully prevents even the most urgently needed tort reforms (reforms that could save us a million lawsuits and ten Israel's worth of money per year), AIPAC is just a non-pit, non-bull, terrier.

A case could be made, one supposes, for outlawing *all* lobbying, on the grounds that its results ultimately come at the expense of the average bass-fishing, deer-hunting, nutria-trapping American who lives along the banks of the Alabama River with neither a cause nor a special interest to his name. But I was out in a boat last spring with just such a man, and this is what he told me: "We've got to stop this helping of foreign countries; it's time we helped our own people. I served in the army in Europe and Korea, but it's time we brought the boys home. From everywhere but Israel." I did not inform him that there is no U.S. garrison in Israel; instead, I asked why he made the exception. He responded that the reason was right there in the Bible: "God blesses those who bless Israel and protects those who protect Israel." He

pulled out a pamphlet printed by his chapel to that effect.

Here is one reason why George W. Ball is so enormously frustrated by his fellow citizens' lack of "odium" (in George Washington's phrase) for American Jews, despite their "passionate attachment" to their "favorite nation": simply put, many American non-Jews do not regard that "passionate attachment" as sinister or strange, but merely as a normal expression of solidarity, and certainly understandable given the history of the Jews from Amalek to George W. Ball. Indeed, many non-Jewish Americans, including my bass-fishing, deer-hunting, nutria-trapping friend, happen to share that "passionate attachment."

ALL in all, this book recalls an old joke. When a Viennese Jew was asked why he read the city's anti-Semitic paper instead of the pro-Jewish *Neue Freie Presse*, he answered that in the latter the Jews were always being harried by Cosacks, persecuted by Romanians, fleeing as refugees, while in the former the Jews were sure of themselves, all-powerful, globally victorious. "So why should I be depressed, when I can feel like a giant?"

If Israel were half so powerful as the Balls assert, it would never have needed any help from American Jews; and if American Jewish lobbying were half so effective as the Balls claim, Israel would not have had to hazard its forces in high-risk ventures time and again. It could, for instance, simply have lobbied the U.S. government to

stop the Arab armies in their tracks in 1948, or to attack Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor in 1981.

On the subject of Osirak, finally, the Balls do concede that, although the raid was in contravention of the Arms Export Control Act,

many may now look back on [it] as a wise and prophetic action. Had the IDF not destroyed that reactor in 1981, Saddam Hussein might well have been able to use nuclear weapons in the Gulf war.

Despite the "might well" conditionality, by the Balls' own account Israel, with just one of its exploits, thus amply earned its lifetime keep. Out of a \$300-million per annum defense budget, how much would we have been willing to pay to prevent, say, just four crude and small Hiroshima-sized fission bombs from being used against our Desert Storm troops?

Of course there is no certainty that fission bombs would have been produced by an intact Osirak, or, if produced, that they would have been used—Saddam Hussein did not even try to use his merely tactical chemical weapons. (He, too, can be deterred.) But then again my friend who lives on the banks of the Alabama River would not agree that Israel's cause needs a dollars-and-cents justification, or a strategic justification, or a Saddam Hussein/nuclear-weapons justification. And neither do the millions of other Americans who believe that U.S. action overseas is supposed to promote humanitarian purposes, and the cause of democracy.

### Moscow Gold

*Eric Breindel*

**W**ERE the U.S. Communist party (CPUSA) and its various front organizations legitimate phenomena of domestic American political life, despite the fact that they espoused a radical—even heretical—political program? Or did these forces represent a foreign and essentially artificial growth on the American body politic? Did they merely draw together proponents of an unpopular political agenda, or did their practices and goals constitute a conspiracy to advance the interests of a foreign power?

The debate over the nature of American Communism has turned on this set of questions virtually since the birth of the CPUSA. During the McCarthy era, scholars like the late Sidney Hook argued that, for all practical purposes, the American Communist movement was, in fact, something on the order of a conspiracy—a conspiracy bent on political subversion. As Hook saw it, the Communists were unlike members of any other radical sect, in that their primary allegiance was to a foreign power.

On the other side, the Communists and their defenders—particularly the revisionist historians who have dominated recent scholarship on the subject—have sought to demonstrate that American Communism was a profoundly indigenous radical movement. These historians have rarely gone so far as the slogan adopted by the CP during the Popular Front period of the mid-1930's—"Communism is 20th-century Americanism." But the general revisionist thrust has been to depict the party and its

many fronts as home-grown political undertakings animated by domestic concerns and by justified discontent over the course of U.S. foreign policy.

An alternative interpretation is that the CP's devotion to Moscow was a natural byproduct of its quest to bring "genuine" socialism to America. According to this reading, the leaders of the American Communist movement were not, in any sense, conscious agents of Moscow. And the party's readiness to twist and turn in order to accommodate itself to every shift in Soviet policy (the "zigzag strategy," to use internal CP terminology) was merely a derivative feature of its program.

To some, the issue may seem too nuanced to matter—a distinction without a difference. After all, the fact that American Communists were among Moscow's most responsive puppets has long been apparent to anyone with even a superficial knowledge of the party's history.

But, actually, there is a world of difference between ideological kinship and formal allegiance—let alone allegiance grounded in financial dependency. Recognizing this reality, American Communists and their allies were always vociferous in denying that Moscow had ever subsidized their movement.

Even more threatening, needless to say, were accusations that the Soviets had recruited spies from within the ranks of the American Communist movement. Communists did not find it embarrassing, *per se*, that Moscow had spies in America: all major powers engage in espionage. But that Moscow's spies should have been American Communists, animated by a primary ideological loyalty to the

USSR, was another matter entirely. This explains the enormous need on the part of pro-Soviet "progressives" to insist on the innocence of the two most famous openly Communist Americans charged with espionage: Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.\*

In this connection, an episode described by Whittaker Chambers in his autobiography, *Witness*, is illuminating. When he was a Soviet agent, Chambers was instructed to deliver gifts to various key members of the secret Washington, D.C. cells for which he was responsible. Chambers protested to his Russian controller that offering gifts to men whose service to the Soviet cause was inspired by a desire to create a better world would offend their sensibilities. Thereupon, the controller explained to Chambers that the gifts were *necessary*: "He who pays is the master."

THE end of the cold war and the accession to power in Russia of a democratically elected government have forced the opening of the Soviet Communist party Central Committee's archive in Moscow. Thanks to this development, documentary evidence concerning the distribution in America of what used to be called "Moscow Gold" is entering the public domain. Beyond these archival revelations, former KGB officials—like Anatoly Yatskov and Major General Oleg Kalugin—are beginning to tell their stories. And information long held closely by the U.S. intelligence community is likewise becoming accessible.

Taken together, this potent combination of sources leaves no doubt whatever that the American Communist movement was, indeed, financed by Moscow. In fact,

\* Revelations from Moscow—including the recent emergence of the self-confessed KGB spymaster Anatoly Yatskov (as Anatoly Yakovlev, Yatskov was the "missing defendant" in the Rosenberg case)—will likely render this effort increasingly difficult. See my column in the *New York Post* of October 8, 1992.

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it now seems plain that even those who charged consistently that the American Communist party, and the causes it supported, were receiving Moscow Gold failed to grasp the full scope of Soviet fiscal control.

By way of illustration, it is interesting that, while conducting a (still-in-progress) criminal investigation of leading Soviet Communist-party (CPSU) officials, Russia's Deputy Prosecutor-General, Yevgeny Lisov, unearthed and confiscated a number of Central Committee documents concerning Soviet financial support—via the KGB—for the American Communist party. They are at once revealing and disturbing. (Some are also genuinely funny.)

Lisov, for example, located letters to high Soviet officials from Gus Hall, General Secretary of the CPUSA. One such letter, written in mid-1981, was addressed to Boris Ponamarev, the member of the CPSU Secretariat long responsible for "foreign parties and allied organizations." Here Hall explains that "objective developments . . . are creating the most favorable situation for our party being able to influence the mass upsurge." According to Hall, "Tens of millions [of Americans] have become disillusioned. They are moving toward mass actions." Hall goes on to tell Ponamarev that the party needs funds "to reach the millions with our message," and he further notes that "a few hundred dollars can make the difference between victory and defeat in a congressional campaign."

This plea is curious in at least one special respect. Never in its history has the CPUSA elected a Communist—running *as* a Communist—to Congress. Consequently, it can only be assumed that Hall is referring to Democratic congressional campaigns in which he intends to deploy Communist cadres. Yet anyone who suggested, at the time, that the Communist party—armed with money from Moscow—was assisting a particular Democratic candidate would have been greeted with outrage and assailed as a practitioner of McCarthyism.

Hall's letter also reflects a stunning—and comic—lack of political insight. To believe in mid-1981, at the height of Ronald Reagan's popularity, that there was mass disillusionment with his administration required—to say the least—a highly skewed perspective. Nevertheless, Moscow looked with favor on Hall's request. He received his annual allocation, estimated by Lisov at \$2 million.

A 1983 "Dear Comrades" letter from Hall (addressed to the Soviet Politburo at large) affords more evidence of the U.S. party chief's inability to grasp the realities of American political life. This time Hall describes, in grandiose terms, the party's plan to build mass circulation for its newspaper, the *Daily World*, and to "organize work in the coming 1984 elections." He explains that "our one single-most serious obstacle . . . is the lack of financial means."

This letter, too, contains one special point of interest. Hall refers to the CP's role in a coming rally in Washington, D.C. for "Peace, Equality, and Jobs." Such a rally did, in fact, take place in 1983. Even then, it was not difficult for students of the hard Left to recognize the Communist hand in the event. The same applies to the various "nuclear-freeze" rallies of the early 1980's. The nature of the literature distributed at these gatherings, the orientation of the slogans, and—in the case of foreign-policy-related demonstrations—the absence of any criticism of the USSR always served as telltale signs of CP influence.

Yet, again, anyone who at the time called the 1983 "Jobs" rally Communist-dominated—some brave souls on the far Right did so—was promptly dismissed as a McCarthyite fanatic. And to have suggested that the demonstration was actually being funded by Moscow would have been to court even greater opprobrium. Now, however, the truth emerges. Hall got the money; and, in this instance at least, the Soviets got their money's worth. The rally was billed as a manifestation of discontent on the part of American workers with

Reagan's policies. Nationally prominent Democrats and liberals addressed the demonstrators. From Moscow's standpoint the event was a striking success.

Still, by 1987, Hall was again forced to plead for money. Writing on this occasion to Anatoly Dobrynin, the Soviet ambassador in Washington, Hall asked for an additional \$2 million per year beyond the \$2 million he was already counting on. "I cannot overemphasize that the 'wolf is at the door,'" Hall explained by way of apology for his special request; he even claimed that "we [are] . . . mortgaging our homes." And, once again, he succeeded—though not fully. Lisov has produced a receipt, signed by Hall and dated March 19, 1988, for \$3 million (a million dollars less than the American party chief had sought). The receipt is entirely handwritten, as is an earlier one, also signed by Hall, reflecting a \$2-million payment in 1987.

In short, even under Gorbachev, even as late as 1989, Moscow Gold was still flowing into CPUSA coffers.

Also confirmed in the course of the past year was the Soviet role in financing an important Communist front: the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship (NCASF). Some months ago, Alan Thomson, the Council's executive director—who was arrested in 1987 in a Washington, D.C. hotel room and subsequently indicted for currency-law violations—agreed to plead guilty to reduced charges after learning that the government was prepared to press its case against him in open court.

Thomson had received some \$17,000 in American currency from a KGB official in Moscow in 1987. He brought the money back into the U.S. without declaring it, gave it to a trusted NCASF associate, and instructed her to break it up into two deposits in order to avoid a bank inquiry. (Banks are required to inquire into the source of all cash deposits that exceed \$10,000.) What Thomson did not know was that his trusted associate was an FBI informant.

In the old days, Thomson would not have been arrested, since making a criminal case would have forced the Bureau to compromise its informant. Now, however, it appears that the demise of the USSR has freed the FBI to serve the cause of historical accuracy. In the Thomson case, the FBI and the Justice Department apparently decided to make it plain that the notion of Moscow Gold financing pro-Soviet fronts was no paranoid fantasy.

Thomson himself had no way of knowing, when he was arrested, that his NCASF colleague was an FBI informant. Nor could he have guessed that the U.S. Attorney would press the case against him. This explains the bravado with which he greeted the announcement that charges had been filed against him by the government. Back in 1989, Thomson told the press that the FBI was trying "to put a scare into the peace movement." He insisted that his organization was committed to cultural exchange, not to the dissemination of Soviet propaganda; he denied that the NCASF was financed by Moscow; and he vowed that "the McCarthyism of the 1950's is not going to return."

But by May of this year, Thomson had changed his tune. In entering into a plea agreement, he even acknowledged the validity of a 1987 videotape in which he makes reference to the complicity of a Soviet embassy official, and a prominent District of Columbia political activist, in his illegal financial dealings.

The NCASF cannot have been an isolated case. According to Lisov, the support apparatus in Moscow was geared toward proping up no fewer than 98 parties and front organizations in 80 countries. And Alexander Yakovlev, a key adviser to Mikhail Gorbachev, recently told *Izvestia* that the apparatus was necessary because the entire international

Communist movement was "an absolutely artificial, unviable formation . . . salvaged by the money of the Communist party of the Soviet Union." There is no doubt that more information about "progressive" organizations like the NCASF will be emerging from the Central Committee archive.

MEANWHILE, beyond the CPUSA and the NCASF, ex-KGB officials have provided American scholars and journalists with an indication of the other uses to which Moscow Gold has been put here in America.

The most controversial revelation stems from a speech delivered earlier this year in England by General Kalugin. The ex-KGB general declared: "We had an agent—a well-known American journalist with a good reputation—who'd severed ties with us in 1956. I myself convinced him to resume them." But then, in 1968, "after the invasion of Czechoslovakia," the journalist in question would not even let Kalugin buy him lunch.

A former USIA official, Herbert Romerstein, in an article in the right-wing weekly *Human Events*, claimed that the journalist in question was the late I.F. Stone. Kalugin later confirmed the identification. But such was the storm of protest in the mainstream American media—the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* published angry editorials—that Kalugin, at least according to the left-wing weekly, the *Nation*, has begun to retreat. In one especially bizarre article—a *Nation* piece by Stone's would-be biographer—Kalugin is reported to have explained that "when he'd used the term 'agent' . . . he'd simply meant someone who was willing to meet with him from time to time." This claim has been repeated in the *New York Review of Books*.

But obviously, the notion that when a KGB general calls some-

one an "agent," he really means an occasional lunch companion is preposterous—just as preposterous in its way as Gus Hall's letters.

On the other hand, before the controversy arose, Kalugin had tried to explain that financing Stone did not entail telling him what to write. The KGB, according to Kalugin, was merely enabling Stone to do what he would have done anyway—had he enjoyed independent access to financial resources. Nor, it is clear, was Stone forbidden to criticize Soviet policy. And, from time to time, he did so. Kalugin's original point, it seems, was that I.F. Stone—and, presumably, others—were idealists, not mercenaries. When such people differed with Soviet policy, they spoke out, notwithstanding their apparent need for KGB funds.

This, of course, was not the case with Gus Hall, Alan Thomson, and their ilk. Their fealty to the Kremlin was absolute. Nor has Hall, for one, repented or changed his tune. Thus, responding to the documents and attendant revelations concerning the movement to which he has devoted his life, Hall announced at the 1991 CPUSA national convention: "As far as I'm concerned, [all of this] is just another of the many 'Moscow Gold' slanders that have been appearing in the mass media for some 70 years."

But for anyone but a true believer, the evidence is becoming harder and harder to deny or evade; and that evidence shows that Sidney Hook was right: the Communist party and a handful of front organizations *did* represent a conspiracy. Furthermore, this conspiracy was funded from abroad. It remains only to be seen—and documents, in Moscow and in Washington, will, before long, provide the answers—exactly which other groups took Moscow Gold, and exactly which individuals served as witting agents of this tiny but influential conspiracy.

# In Defense of Henry Kissinger

Josef Joffe

THE Jeffersonian message is inscribed on the back of every one-dollar bill, right underneath the chopped-off pyramid: *novus ordo seclorum*, a totally new thing under the sun. America was to be the "beacon of light," the "shining city on the hill." America would ditch power politics once and for all; that was the corrupt game of Europe's royals. There would be but one morality for men and nations—none of that "reason-of-state" stuff, that cynical doctrine which recognizes no higher law than sheer necessity, and no higher interest than the safety and well-being of the state.

Why? Because *raison d'état* was the bane of liberty—a sheer pretense camouflaging the murderous follies of princes and potentates. By contrast, the new republic stood for "freedom and self-government," as Jefferson put it. Inevitably, such a lofty purpose would be contaminated by *Realpolitik* and its callous adjuncts which are secrecy, deceit, manipulation, and war.

The rejection of *Realpolitik* is deeply ingrained in the American mind. And no wonder. For more than a century after the Revolution (when the ex-colonists, desperately angling for allies, played diplomatic hardball as if coached by Richelieu), the American republic had great interests and ambitions, but—happily—no great-power neighbors. Expansion proceeded inward, and if you ignore Indians, Mexicans, and the exhausted Spaniards, conquest remained bloodless.

Indeed, "to conquer without war," reported the French diplomat Turreau to Paris in 1805, was "the first fact" of American diplomacy. Why engage in the sordid shenanigans of European-style ag-

grandizement if you could *buy* half a continent through the Louisiana Purchase or the Alaska fire sale? America was not so much different as lucky, and so the young republic could reap the prizes of power without having to play the game. All the while, from 1814 until the Kaiser's U-boats began prowling the Atlantic, Britain also provided plenty of security free of charge.

Inward expansion plus the British navy left an indelible imprint on the nation's outlook. For more than a century, Americans were free to believe that they could have their cake and eat it—that they could live in a world of states and yet remain unsullied by the normal ways of statecraft. Even two world wars, even the war in Korea, did not cloud this outlook. All of them were "good wars," fought not for self-interest but justice.

It is this subliminal moral yardstick that Walter Isaacson wields against Henry Kissinger, the European-born academic, who is indicted and convicted in *Kissinger: A Biography*\* for carrying a torch for those masterful deceivers and diplomats, Metternich and Bismarck.

Isaacson, a *Time* editor with a Harvard and Oxford background, has taken a *People* magazine perspective of the high and mighty and enriched it with the sophisticated nastiness of a *Vanity Fair* piece. To this he has added a heavy dose of Harvard—what he learned there in the ways of quality research. He has read everything on and by Kissinger as well as a large chunk of contemporary history—even a smattering of Kant. (Hence also the term-paper-type *obiter dicta* sprinkled throughout the book.) Finally, he has put his training as a journalist to work, tracking down virtually everybody who has ever lived or worked with Kissinger and making them talk—from Richard Allen (National Security Council) via Kissinger *mère*

to Elmo Zumwalt (Joint Chiefs of Staff). Most importantly, he has gotten Kissinger to grant him some two-dozen interviews as well as access to his private and public papers. As Theodore Draper put it in a meandering piece in the *New York Times Book Review*: "Cooperating with Mr. Isaacson may come to seem one of [Kissinger's] greatest miscalculations."

*Kissinger* is a great read, a real page-turner. Yet underneath the enormous research, the ingenious dramaturgy, and the generally elegant writing, this is a flawed book. The flaws are buried in the foundations, out of sight as it were, and thus hardly obvious to those readers (and that means most) who will be captured right on page 13 where the saga begins—and held captive till page 768 where it ends in the almost immediate present.

Isaacson uses a honed reportorial technique that suggests judicious evenhandedness, with everybody being allowed to have his say. But it is justice in the style of the old West: "Give him a fair trial and hang him." Isaacson reminds one of the prosecutor who slips in the occasional good word for the culprit to damn him all the more effectively—and to impress the jury as a dispassionate servant of nothing but the truth. It is one step backward, two steps forward—an insinuating attack on the man and his career which, in the end, leaves no sanctuaries. Though the book is copiously footnoted and documented, it is death by anecdote and one-liner, a search-and-destroy mission in language that wraps even the most vicious target-buster in soothing, "objectivizing" magazine prose. Anyone who hates Kissinger will love this book.

But the serious student of American diplomacy should take a closer look at the cracks in the foundation of Isaacson's work. Although he makes an occasional bow to the brutal dilemmas of all statecraft—between *Realpolitik* and *Idealpolitik*, between the ways of democracy and those of power politics—he refuses to understand that statesmen can never do more than straddle these two worlds.

\* Simon & Schuster, 893 pp., \$30.00.

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"Look here, Henry," Isaacson's book fairly seems to scream, "you are an American now, and we Americans bolted from Europe precisely because we wanted Thomas Jefferson and Woodrow Wilson instead of Metternich and Bismarck."

But there is an answer to the question, why not Jefferson and Wilson? It was because America after 1945 was irrevocably chained to the rest of the world, because there was a mortal threat (the Soviet Union), and because there was no longer a friendly neighborhood policeman patrolling the Atlantic, that America now had to balance and to contain, conclude alliances with the good, the bad, and the ugly, take care of its own and of allied security, play at least in part by rules set not by Jefferson but by Ho Chi Minh and Leonid Brezhnev—in short, define and obey a "reason of state."

THERE is an irreducible difference between the realms of domestic and foreign policy. It is the difference between the rule of law and the rule of power. At home, you go to jail for perjury, theft, and murder; there is a state that creates the conditions for a moral life, above all by assuring physical safety. Abroad, security is not a given but a quest; morality is not joined to law, and law is not enforced by a disinterested, all-powerful sovereign. The game is about advantage, power, and survival—and there is no umpire to call a foul or to protect you against the consequences of misplaced credulity.

Isaacson does occasionally doff his cap to such considerations—but only to conceal the punch to come. Thus he intones in the Introduction:

Kissinger had an instinctive feel . . . for power and for creating a new global balance that could help America cope with its withdrawal syndrome after Vietnam.

But then he goes on to insist throughout the book that

real power derives from the tendency to act based on moral principles and ideals. One reason for American influence throughout the 20th century

has been that it does not slavishly pursue realism when higher principles are at stake; instead it fancies itself a beacon for freedom and individual rights.

If these statements were not so nicely hedged, they would be poppycock. In international politics, goodness is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of clout. If it were, Sweden—a country holier than thou in the 1970's—would have ruled the roost. If sheer moral output were the crux, then high-minded Thomas Jefferson could have stopped the Napoleonic Wars by sermonizing; instead, the perfidious British burned down his capital. Did Woodrow Wilson, the greatest moralist since Jefferson, win at Versailles because he wowed them with his democratic fervor? No: it was because France, Britain, Germany, Russia, and Austria were either defeated or exhausted that America's word became the writ of the world—for a while at least. Ditto, though for a good deal longer, after World War II. Power comes from power, and only very rarely from the pulpit.

Nor did the U.S., before or after Kissinger, ever disdain a good power play for the sake of "higher principles." Franklin D. Roosevelt did not hesitate to sup with the devil Stalin in order to crush Hitler and Hirohito. No American President intervened more often in Central America than Wilson himself; though he purported to "teach them how to elect good men," the objective was power and profit, and the tool was not the Declaration of Independence but the U.S. Marine Corps. And let us not forget those despots and dictators—Franco, Salazar, Syngman Rhee, Chiang Kai-shek, the Faisals and Fahds, lately even Assad—whom the U.S. embraced because strategic purpose so demanded.

THIS is not to bad-mouth American foreign policy, but merely to point out the obvious: the world is not Supreme Court country. Yet Isaacson is not alone in believing that America's mission in the world is goodness. Indeed, the problem is one of "false conscious-

ness" on a large scale. Looking at the U.S. from the outside in, one is struck by a perplexing paradox. Compared to France, Britain, or Germany, American society is *obsessed* with power. Public and private vernacular is the language of power. Who is up, who is down? Who has outmaneuvered, trapped, and sunk whom? Somebody is always "upping the ante" to "rout" or "take over" somebody else who is "dug in" and "willing to fight to the last." "End runs," "curve balls," "full-court presses," "knockout blows" are the continuation of war by other metaphors—whether for power, precedence, or profit.

"Empowerment" is the battle cry of the 1990's, and ranking is the national pastime—for children, colleges, teams, and politicians. Mastering football and baseball is better than attending Sandhurst or St. Cyr; raising deception and maneuver to a high art, these games reduce the European favorite, soccer, to clumsy child's play. At home, America seems to be a nation of warriors and strategists imprisoned in a Hobbesian universe, and compared to America's quadrennial civil wars—a/k/a presidential campaigns—European electoral battles are patty-cake. Yet when it comes to the world at large, Americans, however they act, insist on talking like Jeffersonians.

ENTER Henry Kissinger, he of the heavy German accent and the Spenglerian language. It is hard to explain the loathing Kissinger has attracted on both the Left and the Right unless one resorts to a bit of collective psychoanalysis, or more precisely, to use a Teutonic term: *Ideologiekritik*.<sup>\*</sup> For Heinz Kissinger, as he was known in his native town of Fürth, committed the ultimate sin of not only conducting *Realpolitik* but also talking about it. Maybe he had spent too much time in academia where, at least in the old pre-PC days, there were no prizes for puffery and sanctimony.

<sup>\*</sup> Literally: "critique of ideology," a Marxian term designating the analysis of the familiar gap between ideal and interest, pretension and reality, self-portrayal and actual motivation. The academic term is "sociology of knowledge," as pioneered by Karl Mannheim in *Ideology and Utopia*.

Maybe he was too much of an intellectual and thus too tempted to render theoretically explicit what was better left unsaid. ("It has no bite; it is not conceptual," he would berate his speech writers.) Maybe, then, what really riled Left and Right alike was Kissinger's penchant for orating against the very grain of American foreign-policy ideology.

On the first page of his dissertation as a graduate student at Harvard, Kissinger had already set up the realist's first commandment: thou shalt seek "stability based on an equilibrium of forces." He would repeat that idea endlessly in the White House and at State. In one of his last speeches in office, for instance, he kept stressing the necessity of "furthering American interests in a world where power remains the ultimate arbiter." That is not the American style. America likes to picture itself withdrawn from the world, pristine and unsullied—or, as in 1917 and 1941, going to war like Captain America, as righteous avenger. And even then, the object is not to discipline a foe, but to crush him in preparation for his moral-political rehabilitation. The target of ire is not the enemy's potential but his personality—the nature of his domestic system. Hence, World War I was to "make the world safe for democracy," and not to squelch the Kaiser's imperial ambitions. Nor has this been confined to the distant past. When George Bush went after Saddam Hussein, he could not bring himself to justify the war in terms of interest and strategic necessity. And when he did talk about jobs or oil, he was chastised and ridiculed from Cambridge to Orange County.

So when Kissinger lectured on the tension between *Idealpolitik* and *Realpolitik*, he was bound to upset the oldest of ideological appercarts. In his 1974 congressional testimony on the purpose of détente, he said:

Where the age-old antagonism between freedom and tyranny is concerned, we are not neutral. But other imperatives impose limits on our ability to produce internal changes in foreign

countries. Consciousness of our limits is a recognition of the necessity of peace—not moral callousness.

Translated, that read: "We can no longer play the Wilsonian game when the ultimate risk is nuclear incineration." That did not please the Right. Crusading against the Communists was the thing to do. "Containing" them already smacked of wimpishness, and actually treating with them in Moscow and Peking was, in the eyes of some on the Right, tantamount to treason.

On the Left, a close Harvard colleague, Stanley Hoffmann, wrote of Kissinger: "His was a quest for a *Realpolitik* devoid of moral homilies." Note that Hoffmann did not say "devoid of moral content." But others were less respectful, as was Jimmy Carter when he ran against Gerald Ford. Kissinger's foreign policy, declared Carter, was "covert, manipulative, and deceptive"—which "runs against the basic principles of this country, because Kissinger is obsessed with power blocs, with spheres of influence." This is Isaacson's battle cry, too, and when he is not telling (with quiet relish) yet another story about Kissinger *qua* power-crazed, vanity-driven maniac, he clobbers him as a transplanted Metternich who should have gone to reeducation camp before coming to Washington.

NOT surprisingly, Isaacson devotes half-a-dozen chapters to Vietnam—the Christmas Bombing, Cambodia, and all the rest. The moral of the tale as he tells it is well-known: in the end, the U.S. emerged from this war with neither peace nor honor, with 58,000 dead and nothing to show, with a shell-shocked society that remains traumatized to this day. In these chapters, Isaacson depicts Kissinger as betraying both President Thieu and America's best traditions in one fell swoop. But as John Podhoretz has pointed out in his review of this book in the *Wall Street Journal*, it is "most troubling" that

Isaacson simply asserts that in his negotiations with the North Vietnamese Mr. Kissinger was

[merely] seeking a "decent interval" between an American withdrawal and the collapse of . . . South Vietnam.

What should have been proven remains a "cavalierly" argued indictment.

With a bit more charity, the argument could (and should) have gone the other way around. What does a diplomat do when he must bargain empty-handed? America had fought imperial wars—wars of interest, not justice—before: against Mexicans, Indians, Spaniards, and in diverse Latin American locales. In each case, the engagements were brief and decisive. And if you ignore Custer's Last Stand, the enemy was easily outgunned and outmaneuvered. Consequently, the folks back home did not carp but cheered. In Vietnam, however, America was stuck—in a contest where the traditional American way of war ("there is no substitute for victory") could not work because the enemy was sheltered by two nuclear-armed great powers. As Israel found out in Lebanon in 1982, democratic electorates do not like indecisive wars, whatever the moral impetus behind them.

So Nixon and Kissinger were stuck, too. With hindsight, it is easy to claim that they should have called it quits in 1969. South Vietnam would have fallen sooner, but some 20,000 Americans would have lived. Statesmen, however, do not have the gift of foresight; they must act in the here and now. And so Nixon and Kissinger acted—yes, with secrecy, deception, and manipulation—to snatch a settlement out of the jaws of defeat. Up against Peking, Moscow, and Hanoi, should they have called a daily town meeting to discuss strategy and tactics? This is not how the thirteen colonies won the Revolutionary War, this is not how *any* nation wins wars. To depict tragedy as treachery, and to confound the ways of statecraft with those of democracy, as Isaacson does, makes for a good morality tale but not for a dispassionate assessment of America's debilitating dilemmas in those years.

Isaacson is far more charitable

where secrecy, deception, etc. led to outcomes he likes—which is a backhanded way of paying tribute to the very *Realpolitik* he purports to disdain. The only halfway sympathetic billing Kissinger gets may be found in the two chapters dealing with the Yom Kippur War and Middle East shuttle diplomacy. On the great question of whether Kissinger, himself a Jew, held back on the resupply in order to make Israel properly receptive to American cues, Isaacson is at his journalistic best: he unearths documents, lets the protagonists speak for themselves, and ends on a properly agnostic note. The reader learns a few new things and is otherwise left to make up his own mind.

The shuttle chapter almost ends up as a paean to Kissinger as latter-day Talleyrand. Isaacson quotes Abba Eban:

I felt that if [Kissinger] wanted to sell a car with a wheel missing, he would achieve his purpose by an eloquent and cogent eulogy of the wheels that remained.

Nixon, *soi-disant* used-car salesman, would have lapped that up as the ultimate compliment.

But in this particular context Isaacson does realize that “the line between diplomacy and duplicity . . . is a fine one.” If you want to play the “honest broker,” as Bismarck claimed for himself, you cannot read everything into the *Congressional Record*. You have to create, as Yitzhak Rabin recalled, the “kind of personal . . . intensive relationship that forced people in a way to be committed to him.” Kissinger did so, Isaacson notes benevolently, by “phrasing his remarks carefully so as not to contradict directly what he was telling someone else.” And lo and behold, “duplicity” paid off, entangling all the players in a tightening web by which they could be dragged off into a separation-of-forces agreement. Notes Isaacson with grudging respect:

By personalizing his diplomacy

in the Middle East [read: by cajolery, flattery, and manipulation], Kissinger was able to make use of the intangible good will that comes from what passes for friendships among statesmen.

By contrast, Isaacson concedes, “[t]he Rogers Plan of 1969 . . . was straightforward and unambiguous; it did not get far.” Indeed, without detracting in any way from Carter’s Camp David negotiations, it should be noted and recorded that Kissinger’s backbreaking shuttle diplomacy prepared the way for one of the greatest triumphs of American diplomacy: peace between Israel and Egypt.

Kissinger also gets good grades (plus the routine slaps in the face) for his triangular diplomacy with Peking and Moscow—which was just as secretive, vainglorious, and headline-hogging as everything else this Bismarck transplant from Bavaria is said to have done in Isaacson’s indictment. But why invoke Jefferson when the fruits of *Realpolitik* are sweet? And so Isaacson comments approvingly:

The triangular global balance that Kissinger had helped construct was paying off: due to America’s success in forging realistic [*sic!*] relationships with China and Russia, the North Vietnamese found themselves feeling isolated from their primary patrons.

In the conclusion, Isaacson even drags out the Hapsburg Beelzebub in praise of his Harvard-bred disciple. The new “three-dimensional chess game” was a “triumph of hard-edged realism worthy of a Metternich.”

MAYBE these compliments were just put in as cover-your-backside afterthought—to pretend evenhandedness and to blunt the vicious point of the rapier that Isaacson so relentlessly wields to slash and pierce. But one would like to think otherwise. It is impossible to write an 893-page book about a man like Henry Kissinger without understanding the critical

difference between the person and his policies. Bismarck and Talleyrand were not nice guys. Yet one managed to unify Germany by hook and by crook, by “blood and iron,” while managing to keep the peace for the next twenty years. The other, club-footed and cynical to the nth degree, succeeded in returning the most hated nation in Europe—post-Napoleonic France—to the community of the great powers by the time that it took the Congress of Vienna to finish the last waltz.

Kissinger made the best of a bad hand of cards dealt to him during America’s first defeat in war—and more. He handled a President who ended up like King Lear wandering crazedly about the heath. He built the foundation of peace in the Middle East. He turned a dispirited America into the apex of the triangle that continued to shape world politics until the Soviet Union collapsed, leaving the U.S. on top of a “unipolar” international system. For all this, Isaacson does give ample credit—it would have been impossible to do otherwise.

ONE of the best lines recounted by Isaacson was uttered by Kissinger, then Secretary of State, during the bar mitzvah in Washington of the son of the Israeli ambassador Simcha Dinitz. Was the ceremony much different from Heinz’s own back in Germany? a reporter wanted to know. Deadpanned Kissinger: “Ribbentrop did not come to my bar mitzvah.” Call it self-deprecating or self-inflating, it beats anything James Baker or Cyrus Vance might have said at the cotillion. And funnily enough, sixteen years out of office, “Henry” continues to be the single most fascinating player on the American stage. For somebody who is supposedly the ranting, raving, and self-serving Spenglerian depicted by Isaacson, that is quite a feat. Perhaps Kissinger, he of the professorial mien and the Teutonic accent, is not such an un-American character after all.

## How (Not) to Save the Underclass

THE END OF EQUALITY. By MICKEY KAUS. *Basic Books*. 293 pp. \$25.00.

Reviewed by MICHAEL HOROWITZ

MICKEY KAUS's new book of social policy, *The End of Equality*, has become a testament for Democrats who have seen tragic follies committed in their name and who now seek new governing strategies. A *New Republic* contributing editor, Kaus focuses here on the growing breakdown of urban civility and the collapse of our cities' once-functioning institutions. He laments what he sees as the country's loss of community and its growing tendency to segregate itself by race and class. In the process of formulating new answers to these seemingly intractable problems, Kaus engages in a committed—but ultimately failed—effort to define a new vision for American liberalism.

Kaus first mounts a savage criticism of such liberal icons as income-redistribution programs, labor unions, and a welfare system which exerts no demands on its recipients and destroys them in the process. To Kaus, the present welfare system has nurtured a growing urban underclass whose pathologies make social progress impossible. In particular, he blames Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) for the "explosion in numbers" of single-parent households, for having "subsidized and sustained a demoralizing lower-class culture in the ghettos," and for having "anchored" a black underclass to its present fate. He also blames such post-1966 liberal sacred cows as Medicaid and Food Stamps for inducing millions to "take advantage of the dole." Fi-

nally, he laments the stopgap measures that have been proposed—such as the 1989 reforms sponsored by Senator Daniel P. Moynihan (D., NY)—because their "soft" workfare component has only abetted the downward spiral of the underclass.

What would Kaus do instead? The first and critical step is a massive program of federally-guaranteed and -administered jobs for the able-bodied unemployed, including unwed mothers, with satisfactory performance on the job serving as the sole criterion for continued government support. Next, Kaus proposes a highly ambitious program of "community-building"—a mixture of government coercion and bribes to get middle-class whites to mix with poor blacks. Here his proposals range from reinstituting the military draft, to massive increases in federal support for urban schools, parks, libraries, and city governments in general, to an "everybody-wait-in-the-same-waiting-room" form of national health insurance which would essentially deprivatize American medicine.

KAUS has written a brave book which looks honestly at the causes and effects of America's urban underclass. Yet I believe that the solutions he proposes to the problems he so straightforwardly faces just will not work. If tried, they will not only fail to ameliorate the condition of the urban underclass but will create even sharper social and class divisions than already exist.

Kaus's ideas are rooted in his continuing faith in the efficacy of large-scale government programs. This is ironic, for his descriptions of the actual workings of big government are reminiscent of nothing so much as the anti-government rhetoric of the Reagan White House. Thus, Kaus ascribes the spectacular failure of the job-training program, CETA, to the successful efforts of public-employee unions to bar CETA's 750,000 hapless participants from meaningful

work. But those unions would surely be just as successful in gutting Kaus's own program, or else in organizing its participants into a cadre of permanent government employees doing make-work jobs at union scale. (In 1990, Kaus notes, out of a federal payroll of 2,200,000, only 403 people were fired for nonperformance.) And it is strange, in one so attuned to the inefficiencies of government bureaucracies, that Kaus should expect the Department of Labor to be able even to administer his proposed \$50-billion payroll, let alone impose his "tough-love" work requirements on the recipients of its largesse.

Nor does Kaus take into account the legal and constitutional constraints which alone make his plan infeasible. The Supreme Court decision in *Goldberg v. Kelly* (Justice William Brennan's favorite decision) conditioned any withdrawal of welfare benefits on "due-process" hearings. One can imagine such hearings under a Kaus workfare regime, with attorneys hassling over no-show excuses, job ratings, and the proper interpretation of hundreds of small-print pages of regulations dealing with how and when workfare participants may be sanctioned. In such proceedings, one can count on government to surrender rather than to fight—especially if, as Kaus promises, the alternative to workfare is to be cast out into a welfareless world. So much for the legal side; on the constitutional side, one or two new Supreme Court Justices who believe in "process rights," and Kaus can kiss his whole plan goodbye.

Kaus identifies with Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, citing in particular FDR's 1935 message to Congress attacking cash handouts. But he misreads the history and the lessons of the New Deal. In fact, Roosevelt attacked not only cash doles but such welfare jobs as "cutting grass, raking leaves, or picking up papers in the public parks." The Works Progress Ad-

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ministration (WPA) programs, which Kaus romanticizes, and on which he builds his own program, were boondoggles whose unpopularity almost sank the New Deal.

Roosevelt's most enduring contribution was, rather, the cash-benefit programs which Kaus derides as "Money Liberal" initiatives: Social Security, unemployment insurance, disability benefits, and even AFDC. These New Deal paradigms supplied modest cash floors for persons unable to work. They survive today (but in vastly inflated form), while the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and WPA failed to make it beyond the first few years of Roosevelt's administration.

KAUS's aversion to cash benefits, understandable in view of what has happened to them, blinds him to what was successful about New Deal programs. Contrary to the modern income-redistribution schemes whose failings Kaus rightly deplores, New Deal awards were intended not as income transfers but as short-term safety nets, *and were thus kept deliberately modest*. The small size of these awards was a key feature in their design. Thus, if one were truly being faithful to the spirit of the New Deal, one would cut back the present size and scope of welfare benefits, particularly in the high-award states where, not surprisingly, the underclass is centered. Cosmically-sized WPA's are precisely the wrong answer.

Another feature of the New Deal design was its attentiveness to values. Frances Perkins, FDR's Labor Secretary and perhaps the most liberal member of his cabinet, broke off relations with the head of her own department's Children's Bureau after discovering that he had authorized amendments to AFDC allowing benefits for mothers of illegitimate children. Secretary Perkins had herself been a long-time volunteer in homes for what used to be called unwed mothers, and she believed that the availability of public welfare for such women had multiplied their numbers, particularly in the black community. Instead, she endorsed payments to "deserv-

ing mothers" only—those who had been widowed or divorced. Kaus, who well understands the significance of the 90-percent illegitimacy rates in many underclass ghettos, might take a lesson from Secretary Perkins's insight that giving less money discourages behavior just as surely as giving more money encourages it.

THE second pillar of Kaus's "civic liberalism" is his community-building programs. These too are doomed to failure, for reasons painfully obvious to anyone who has struggled with the legacy of Lyndon Johnson's social-welfare policy. Breaking with the New Deal tradition of giving cash directly to beneficiaries, Johnson undertook a utopian effort to eliminate poverty and integrate American classes by essentially Kaussian means: a massive trickle-down infusion of federal funds to builders, social workers, doctors, school systems, voluntary organizations, and just about every trade association inside the Washington Beltway.

Johnson thought as Kaus thinks: only "real money"—huge sums of money—could solve the problems of the poor. Next, Johnson knew that the only way to garner sufficient political support to keep those funds flowing would be to enlist large numbers of corporations and virtually the entire non-profit sector in federal projects. This is perhaps LBJ's most lasting contribution to American politics. (Just ask whom the majority of delegates to the past few Democratic conventions work for.)

Yet LBJ's feed-the-horses approach failed for reasons Kaus himself recounts. Section-8 housing builders and school-system bureaucracies do not really make good tribunes of the poor—although they do make great organizers of protest marches against "heartless" budget cuts. Thus, a New York *Times* editorial after the Los Angeles riots last July featured a sharply declining graph line depicting an allegedly "relentless" Reagan/Bush "war against the poor." Helpfully prepared by the National League of Cities, the chart did not reveal to *Times* readers that the "urban" programs on

which it was based included such dubious aids to poor people as subsidies to pay union-level wages to mass-transit employees; EPA sewage-treatment grants; a phased-out emergency-jobs program of the Economic Development Administration, which "produced" low-wage jobs at a taxpayer cost of \$20,000 per job per month; and the Urban Development Action Grant program, which during a boom time for real estate subsidized the likes of the Hyatt Corporation and General Motors to build office buildings and hotels.

What is clear is that the "urban-aid" flag is easily captured by special interests who suit their own needs while invoking the needs of the poor, and whose programs bear no relation to the underclass or to the precipitous decline of America's cities. These are the same interest groups whose abuses are richly detailed in Mickey Kaus's book—and whom he proposes, nevertheless, to keep in clover.

Nor is this all. Focused as he is on enlarging and empowering government, Kaus has not a word to say about the minimum wage, whose reduction would allow the private sector to take the risk of employing ill-trained members of the underclass. He ignores the effects of phony licensing laws which block entry into such high-tech fields as cosmetology. He fails to challenge building-code requirements which gold-plate the costs of housing and prevent the spread of affordable homes. His plea for urban revitalization neglects rent-control laws, responsible for much of the scarcity of housing for poor people. He offers no strategy for ending the monopoly reign of big-city Democratic mayors whose corruptions, he knows, bear a direct and powerful relationship to today's urban decline. He takes no hard look at civil-liberties decisions establishing "rights" for poor people even though such decisions often preclude police officers from closing known crack houses and drug bazaars, and bar school principals and public-housing officials from suspending or evicting the drug dealers and the violent few who bring public institutions to their knees.

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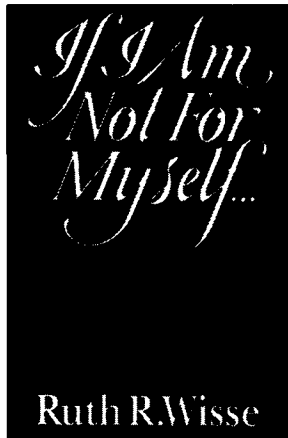
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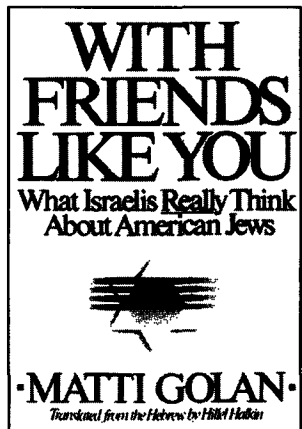
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I still vividly recollect the meetings I used to hold, as an official of the Reagan administration, on the budget problems of local housing authorities and schools. After listening to one housing official's poignant descriptions of day-to-day life in "the projects," I asked him to choose between a doubled budget or the summary authority to evict no more than 10 percent of his tenant population. "Are you kidding?" he responded, adding that he would choose the latter any day. And I also remember the principal who had converted his ghetto school from a wasteland into a place with a long waiting list from which large proportions of students went on to college. Giving a billion dollars to the school he took over would have been of no value, he said. Rather, he attributed his success to the fact that neither his board of education nor the ACLU had learned of his early efforts to impose homework requirements, suspend troublemakers, and generally take charge. "They would have stopped me cold had they known what I was doing."

But Mickey Kaus, who opens his book with a call to "rip . . . the house of liberalism . . . down," aims to empower still further the very interest groups whose rapacity he deplores. He seeks not only costly programs, but those which will incorporate the worst failures of school busing into areas of civil life ranging from day-care centers to doctors' waiting rooms.

ASSUMING, then, the literally impossible—that the political will exists to raise the \$250 billion-plus which Kaus would need to finance his plan—why should we want to? The plan itself will not work, its effects will not last, and trying to implement it will inevitably require imposing on the middle class coercive measures of a kind any small-d democrat should abhor. The building of a socially and racially integrated America cannot take place through coercion of the middle class or through bribery of the poor; it will certainly not take place as a result of the programs advocated by this well-intentioned author.

## Between Two Worlds

THE DYBBUK AND OTHER WRITINGS. By S. ANSKY. Edited and with an Introduction by DAVID G. ROSKIES. Schocken. 220 pp. \$25.00.

Reviewed by HILLEL HALKIN

IT WAS in Israel, back in 1980 or '81. A Russian immigrant and I had pulled a long guard shift on army reserve duty and had begun to talk about our lives to pass the time. As we trudged back and forth along a perimeter fence, I found myself recalling a year spent in the mid-60's in the American South, where I taught at a small-town black college and was active in the civil-rights movement. I spoke of the excitement of it; of how I, a twenty-five-year-old Jewish boy from New York whose previous encounters with the "real" America had been limited to summer vacations, proudly felt I had penetrated its mysteries; of how I believed as never before that its people was mine; of how my Jewish home had never seemed so unimportant to me, so marginal to the struggle I was part of; of how, nevertheless, the consciousness of that Jewish home would not leave me but even became exacerbated in the course of a year which went from freedom songs and Selma to Watts and the first stirrings of anti-Semitism among black activists. Two years later the Six-Day War broke out, and three years after that I was living in Israel.

The Russian had stopped walking somewhere back in Alabama and was leaning against a Quonset hut. "But that's my life!" he said. It wasn't exactly, but the parallel was there. In the early 60's, having grown up in a family that preserved a strong sense of Jewishness despite the Stalin years, he had gotten his degree in petroleum engineering from an institution in Moscow and gone to work in an oil field in Siberia. For the first time he found himself living in rural Russia, away from big cities and Jews and intellectuals. He loved

HILLEL HALKIN, who lives in Israel, is a writer, critic, and translator.

the chaste, immense countryside, the simple goodness of its people. Of his people! He began to dress like them, to talk like them. He tried teaching them about ecology and the need to protect their world from the depredations of big-city bureaucrats and managers. He almost forgot that he was Jewish. And then one day war broke out in the Middle East, and much to his surprise he desperately wanted the Jews to win, while his government backed the Arabs, and the people in their simple goodness backed the government. A few years later he joined the first wave of Soviet immigration to Israel.

We stood there a moment, bemused by our common fates, and moved on. It was not really that much of a coincidence. We both knew that thousands of Jews had traveled the same path. What I did not know, however, because the thought only occurred to me while reading David Roskies's informative introduction to the first English anthology of the work of the Yiddish author S. Ansky, was that all these thousands have had a single prototype. Born Shloyme-Zanvl Rappoport in Vitebsk in 1863, he is one of those authors remembered for a single work—in this case, his drama *The Dybbuk*.

Of course, there were well-known secular *ba'alei teshuvah* (returnees) before Ansky: Jews like Moses Hess and, more tragically, Heinrich Heine and, more spectacularly, Ansky's contemporary Theodor Herzl. But men like these returned to a penitent identification with their Jewishness after a life of European cosmopolitanism. (All three, in fact, were Francophiles who preferred the expatriate life of Paris to their native Germany or Austria.)

Ansky, by contrast, after growing up in an Orthodox home and excelling as a yeshiva student, broke with Judaism to become a *narodnik*, one of the romantically nationalistic Russian intellectuals of his time who gave up city life to go "among the people" in order to educate and be educated by them. Indeed, he held out considerably longer at this than most *narodniki*, many of whom fled, disillusioned with themselves, "the people," or

both, after a few brief weeks or months. For three years he lived as a miner in the Donets Basin—where, as Roskies writes, he did backbreaking labor, “lost most of his teeth to scurvy,” and emerged with his belief in the virtues of Russian folk culture intact.

Ansky's return to Jewishness was a slow and gradual process. Although he left the mines in 1890 for St. Petersburg and abroad, he did not evince a renewed interest in Jewish life until the end of the century, when the founding of the Marxist Jewish Labor Bund suggested to him the possibility of living as both a revolutionary and a Jew. Even then he continued to be politically active, not in the Bund but in the Russian Socialist-Revolutionary party, and it was only after the abortive uprising of 1905, with its terrible counterrevolutionary pogroms, that he began to write again in Yiddish, a language in which he had published a few sketches when young and then abandoned for Russian.

By 1910 his *teshuvah* was complete. “Bearing within me an eternal yearning toward Jewry,” he said at a banquet given in his honor that year,

I nevertheless turned in all directions and went to labor on behalf of another people. My life was broken, severed, ruptured. Many years of my life passed on the frontier, on the border between two worlds.

He begged his audience to forget all that he had written in Russian, and henceforth threw himself into Jewish activities. The two most prominent of these were an ethnographic expedition organized by him in 1912, the first systematic attempt to collect and catalogue the Jewish folklore of Eastern Europe, and his heroic exertions during World War I to provide relief aid to the Jews of Galicia, whose communities had been pillaged and devastated in the fighting, mostly by Russian troops. He died of pneumonia in Warsaw in 1920.

*The Dybbuk* was originally the subtitle of a play which Ansky called *Tsvishn Tsvey Veltn*, “Between Two Worlds,” and it is hard not to asso-

ciate this phrase with his 1910 banquet speech. Did he in some way think of the play—a hauntingly romantic drama, heavily based on Jewish folk motifs, of star-crossed lovers, one of whom, Khonon, returns after his death to take psychic possession of his beloved, Leah—as an allegory of his own life? There is no obvious connection between the two things, but there are subtle suggestions. One is the little theme song with which *The Dybbuk* begins and ends, and which goes in Yiddish,

*Makhmas vos, makhmas vos  
iz di neshomeh  
fun hekhster heykh  
arop in tiefstn grunt?  
Dos faln trogt  
dos oyskumn in zikh.*

It has been translated here by Golda Werman:

Why, oh why did the soul plunge  
From the upmost heights  
To the lowest depths?  
The seed of redemption  
is contained within the fall.

One can take these lines as alluding either to the character of Khonon, who returns to earth to claim Leah and is reunited with her when she too dies, or else, more sweepingly, to the kabbalistic belief in the human soul's incarnation in the coils of matter, from which it must struggle to free itself. Neither interpretation, however, precludes an autobiographical reading as well.

Indeed, *The Dybbuk* itself can be considered the “redemption” that was contained in Ansky's “fall” from Jewishness, for without his years as a *narodnik*, in which he acquired his deep appreciation of folklore and the uses to which it could be put, the play would probably never have been conceived. Just as Khonon returns out of love to haunt a world he no longer belongs to, so Ansky, though he had long ago left the Orthodoxy of his youth, came back to it in *The Dybbuk* to speak ventriloquially through its rituals and beliefs.

And yet while in *The Dybbuk*



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Ansky fashioned something artistically enduring from the unrefined materials of Jewish lore, he took from these materials at least as much as he gave. A thorough reading of Roskies's *The Dybbuk and Other Writings*, the latest volume in Schocken's Library of Yiddish Classics, leaves one reluctantly persuaded that Ansky's "other writings" have not been forgotten without a reason.

For the most part realistic narratives of small-town Jewish life in the Pale of Settlement that emphasize its seamier aspects, these stories and sketches are sardonically observant and competently written, but never quite inspired. Ultimately, it would seem, Ansky's expectations from his fiction were more documentary than creative, and when one compares a piece like "The Sins of Youth," a factual account of his adolescent experiences as a clandestinely subversive Hebrew tutor in a *shtetl*, with its longer fictional version, "Behind a Mask," one is struck by how closely the second, despite its freedom to develop differently, follows the outlines of the first. His imagination was not his strong suit.

Neither, apart from *The Dybbuk*, were Ansky's dramatic powers exceptionally great. While he wrote other plays not included in Roskies's anthology, among them a number of untranslated comedies like *Fotr un Zun* ("Father and Son") and *In a Konspirativer Dira* ("In a Conspiratorial Apartment"), these, it must be said, are rather feeble efforts with characters as wooden as their stage furniture. If *The Dybbuk* is Ansky's only work that soars, this is because its lift comes as much from its materials as from him; the magic is theirs, although his skillful management lets them work their magic on us without unnecessary commentary or intrusive sophistication.

In this sense, *The Dybbuk*, with all its dreamy invocation of the supernatural, is a kind of documentary too. Even when Khonon most sounds as if he is speaking for Ansky—as when he tells his friend Henekh that "just as a goldsmith refines gold in a flame or a farmer threshes the chaff from the wheat, so must we cleanse sin of its dross

until nothing but holiness remains," causing Henekh to rejoin, "Holiness is sin? Where did you get such an idea?"—he is saying nothing that cannot be traced to the Kabbalah and to the maxims of hasidic masters. But Ansky knew how to dig for such stuff, and how to extract it when he found it. Not for nothing had he worked for three years in the Donets mines.

## After the Cold War

INFORMING STATECRAFT: INTELLIGENCE FOR A NEW CENTURY. By ANGELO CODEVILLA. *Free Press*. 350 pp. \$24.95.

Reviewed by PATRICK GLYNN

PRODUCTION of grand world views and new foreign-policy schemes has become something of a cottage industry among scholars and policy analysts since the end of the cold war—although, despite the outpouring of new visions, we are still a long way either from setting basic strategy or from shaping the institutions necessary to achieve our aims. Angelo Codevilla's *Informing Statecraft* is a useful contribution to this growing body of literature, an ambitious effort to digest the lessons of the past and point the way to the future in the vital area of national intelligence.

Obviously the post-cold-war world includes elements of both the old and the new. Codevilla is strongest on the former. With impressive erudition—drawing on a range of examples from Thucydides, the Bible, and modern experience—he attempts to codify the timeless essentials of intelligence practice. These, in a conscious imitation of Aristotelian taxonomy, he divides into four branches: collection, counterintelligence, covert action, and analysis. To each area he rigorously applies Aristotle's question, "What is the purpose of this activity?" Again and

again he demonstrates convincingly that failure often comes from the simple inability of intelligence officers and bureaucracies to keep larger strategic objectives explicit and in view.

What is best about this book is its uncompromising critique of the American intelligence services, especially the CIA. The problems Codevilla exposes are well-known among those of a strategic cast of mind who have served in the foreign-policy apparatus of the U.S. government. They boil down to the absence of what might be called a "strategic culture" (Codevilla does not use the phrase) among most of our intelligence bureaucrats (as well as our foreign-service officers, whose outlook and backgrounds are similar). Far from being the sinister mirror image of the KGB, as popular mythology would have it, the CIA is a perfect reflection of upper-middle-class, university-educated American culture: unstrategic, ethnocentric, and, of course, liberal. "The typical [CIA case] officer," writes Codevilla,

was brought up in a nice American suburb during the 1960's and graduated in the top half of his class from a typical American college in the 1970's and 1980's. He has never done manual labor, and has never been personally close to anyone who has lived by it. He has never had to struggle for his next meal, and has never known anyone who has. He has no idea of life under arbitrary power.

The value of Codevilla's account is to connect the CIA's chronic failures, in both operations and analysis, with its corporate or bureaucratic culture, which as an outsider with "inside" knowledge—a former professional staff member of the Senate Intelligence Committee—he has been in a unique position to observe. As he demonstrates, the CIA has suffered habitually from cultural and organizational bias, not least in its adherence to the analyst Sherman Kent's 1949 mandate to keep clear of policy judgments. In the effort to remain aloof from the policy battle, the CIA has often produced intelligence divorced from strategic aims, even as it has subtly encour-

PATRICK GLYNN, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, is the author of *Closing Pandora's Box: Arms Races, Arms Control, and the History of the Cold War* (New Republic Books/Basic Books).

aged a certain (usually, predictably liberal) policy line.

THE most compelling chapters of *Informing Statecraft* are the middle ones, in which Codevilla narrates and explains the long list of American intelligence errors—failure to gauge the extent of the Soviet missile build-up, the size of Soviet military spending, the future of Soviet oil reserves, the probable political consequences of overthrowing Vietnam's President Diem, the nature of the Nicaraguan Sandinista movement, the overall strength or weakness of the Soviet economy and political structure, and so forth. These chapters are engrossing and argued with the polemical force and cogent mastery of detail familiar to readers of Codevilla's many COMMENTARY articles. They provide ample corroboration of Senator Daniel P. Moynihan's pronouncement: "For a quarter-century the CIA has been repeatedly wrong about the major political and economic questions entrusted to its analysts."

To compound the problem, as Codevilla writes, intelligence failure has gone hand in hand with intellectual arrogance and the bureaucracy's chronic incapacity to learn from its mistakes. "We may not always be right," an old agency saying goes, "but we're never wrong." Still, the CIA has not always been wrong, either: recently, for example, it has been far more prescient than the State Department or the White House on developments in the former Yugoslavia. Codevilla's account would have benefited from an effort to balance the CIA's many blunders with illustrations of success (though, to judge from his portrait, they are few and far between). But in general, his historical indictment is as persuasive as it is searing.

Where the book is weaker is in regard to its major ambitions—comprehensiveness, and applicability to the future. Codevilla's Aristotelian method, while laudably thorough, can also be tiresome. The first and last thirds of the book consist essentially of dozens of precepts. To each of these, Codevilla invariably attaches an illustrative example; some of these are telling,

others rather flat. As for the precepts, they are too numerous to be remembered, and often too obvious to be memorable. One could probably glean the essence of what Codevilla is attempting to convey from a careful reading of Machiavelli's *The Prince*. Codevilla's larger point—that CIA officers are for the most part lamentably ignorant both of history and the Western political tradition—is no doubt justified. But whether such knowledge can be transplanted piecemeal into a single volume is to be doubted.

THE other drawback of the book is perhaps more serious—its backward-looking character. Take the area of weapons proliferation. Of all the challenges facing U.S. intelligence in the coming decade, none is more fundamental to our security than tracking, and where possible stemming, the flow of missiles and mass-destruction weapons and technologies to the third world. It will not be an easy job. Codevilla is aware of the problem

and treats it often along the way, but nowhere is there an effort to synthesize or to prescribe new approaches to this threat, which should include, among other things, the reorganization of a foreign-policy and defense bureaucracy originally shaped to cope with the very different danger of a hegemonic Soviet Union.

When Codevilla does touch on proliferation, his viewpoint is as often as not retrospective. For example, concerning the massive intelligence failure involved in our underestimating Iraq's nascent nuclear capability, he writes:

Given that after the [Gulf] war the U.S. had judged that it had destroyed Iraq's nuclear reagents only to be told by a defector that significant quantities had been hidden successfully, it is a safe bet that the U.S. technical collection system stood even less chance of getting substantial information on secret Soviet weapons and stockpiles. . . .

Certainly, during the cold war, we knew less than we should about

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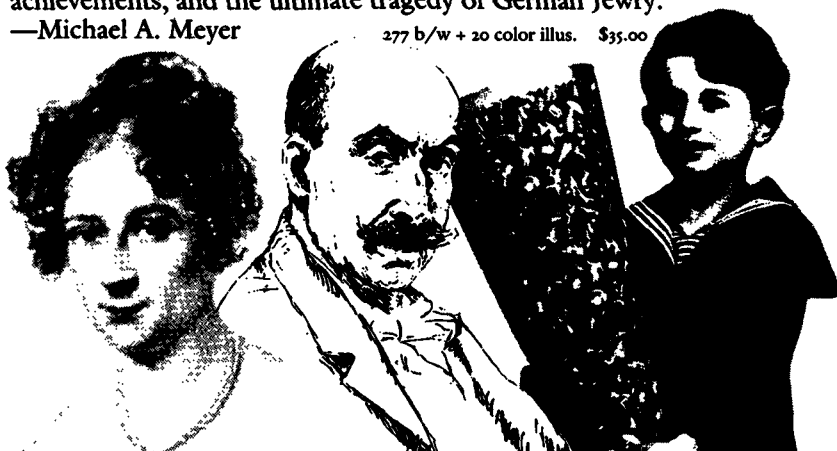
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From left to right: Rachel Varnhagen, 1771–1831 (Courtesy of the Leo Baeck Institute, New York); Max Liebermann, 1847–1933 (Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz); Jacob Katz on his first day of school carrying a cone filled with sweets, customarily given to children on this occasion (Courtesy of Dr. Jay Katz).

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Soviet military activities, but that is old news. Though claiming to prescribe "Intelligence for a New Century," Codevilla's book too often reflects a cold-war mind-set. He still ranks as his highest priority the threat from Soviet military power.

While that threat should not by any means be discounted—especially as Russia drifts toward a new authoritarianism—it seems less pressing at the moment than the danger from what Russell Seitz has called the "yard sale" of Soviet military equipment and high technology. (There is a parallel counterintelligence threat, if Russians provide to others, as they did to Iraq, the know-how to "spoof"—i.e., deceive—American satellites.) Codevilla's passion for yesterday's battles—especially the long interminable domestic controversy over arms control, verification, Soviet cheating, etc.—seems to get in the way of a more open-minded, imaginative attempt to identify the specific new challenges that U.S. intelligence is likely to face.

His political *tour d'horizon* is

similarly disappointing. Though the past few years have not always been kind to prognosticators—including the present writer—Codevilla is still worrying about problems that have clearly gone away: for example, the issue of whether Germany will tilt West or East in the post-cold-war world. This goes hand in hand with his overestimate of Soviet, or Russian, power. Moscow holds no magnetic pull on Bonn or Berlin today. What Germans fear instead is being overrun, not by East-bloc armies but by hordes of East-bloc immigrants fleeing the economic and political trainwreck of Communism—and the loss of their living standard that such an influx implies. That is the key force driving German domestic politics.

On one central issue—covert action—Codevilla's historical perspective yields conclusions both sensible and forward-looking. Thus, he argues persuasively that the main motive for covertness has as often as not been political indecision—the unwillingness of politi-

cal leaders to face up to and explain to the American people their real objective. From the Bay of Pigs to the *contras*, covert action has usually been a half-measure, designed to conceal U.S. activities less from the enemy than from the American populace. When it has worked, as Codevilla shows, success has come not so much from the effectiveness of the activities themselves as from a perception, in the target country, that the United States has thrown its weight behind a certain side. While the need for covert action has not disappeared, one important lesson of the cold war, well digested by Codevilla, is that the United States tends to be strongest when it acts openly, on the basis of stated principles.

Flaws notwithstanding, this is a valuable book. Its major lessons—the need for a more strategic and historically informed view of world events, for more understanding of non-Anglo-Saxon cultures, for more language training, and for more flexibility and accountability in intelligence bureaucracies—need to be taken into account by those in Congress and elsewhere working to reshape our intelligence services for post-cold-war duty. Whether Codevilla's many admonitions can begin to overcome the culturally rooted blind spots that have hindered our intelligence performance in the past—or the basic fallibility that afflicts all human beings when they attempt to peer into the future—remains to be seen.

### Thought-Policeperson

**THE BIAS-FREE WORD FINDER: A DICTIONARY OF NONDISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE.** By ROSALIE MAGGIO. *Beacon Press*. 304 pp. \$15.00 (paper).

Reviewed by EDWARD LIPMAN

"LANGUAGE both reflects and shapes society," writes Rosalie Maggio, an editor and author whose books include *How to Say It*

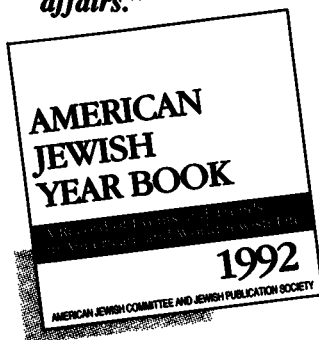
EDWARD LIPMAN, here making his first appearance in COMMENTARY, is pursuing graduate studies in history at Cambridge University in England.

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and *The Beacon Book of Quotations by Women*—and who is clearly more interested in the shaping than in the reflecting. “Ordinary people,” she continues, “have chosen to replace linguistic pejoration and disrespect with words that grant full humanity to all of us.” To assist such “ordinary people” (by whom she means chiefly to refer to herself and the legions of other thought-policepersons abroad today in the land), Maggio has written this expanded and updated edition of her 1987 *Nonsexist Word Finder: A Dictionary of Gender-Free Usage*.

The main body of the book consists of a list, in alphabetical order, of offending words, phrases, and concepts, together with extended discourses on the social and cultural evils they allegedly represent and suggested replacements for them. Thus, “Montezuma’s revenge,” “in the arms of Morpheus,” “Jack Frost,” “Tom Thumb,” and a myriad other “male-based” phrases are to be scrapped in favor of “female-based expressions, creative expressions of your own, or alternatives.” Nor are women the only protected species here: Maggio also piously endeavors to root out and correct terms

that are prejudicial to men as well as words and phrases that are biased against people because of their race, age, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin, or belief system.

Nothing, in fact, is too innocuous to escape her transvaluing zeal; as she quotes a fellow policeperson on the tyranny of apparent trifles: “Individually, too trivial to protest; collectively, potent enough to humiliate, enrage, and incapacitate.”

BUT the listing of alternatives, however tortured or ludicrous—“bat-keeper” for “batboy,” “snow figure” for “snowman”—is not the most egregious aspect of this book. Rather, it is the many entries pointing accusingly to, for example, the relative paucity of women in certain occupations; the entries defining and explaining “-isms” both well-known (racism and sexism) and less well-known (adulthood and heterosexism); and the “key con-

cept entries” on such topics as education (unfair to minorities), poverty (both a “sexist and racist” issue), and even the perniciousness of the idea of manliness (“whatever a man does is manly . . . because a man is doing it”). It is in these discursive notes that Maggio most clearly reveals her agenda for how we ought to live.

How ought we to live? For one thing, “in an ideal world there would be no external evaluation of a person’s moral or physical courage . . . we could each determine our own standards.” For a second thing, in that “ideal world” we would never think of a family as an arrangement in which the husband is the provider, the wife stays at home, and the children are heterosexual; such a “family of nostalgia” is really only “an aberration that predominated for several decades after World War II.” For a third thing, we would never commit the sin of “adulthood,” defined as the tendency to “discount children and teenagers as too immature to know what’s good for them and too inexperienced to do any-

thing valuable.” In other words, we would never call anyone a coward, praise a woman’s maternal instinct, or tell our children to go to school when they did not want to.

THE sheer silliness of all this stands in stark contrast to Maggio’s dead seriousness about it. Yet as anyone knows who has paid the least attention to these matters, she is right to be serious, for the ideas she expresses, silly or not, are today widely taught in our schools and universities, have become gospel truth to an influential and growing segment of our society, and are increasingly requisite for academic and even commercial success. The movement that began relatively innocently with the excision of “he” as a generic pronoun for “human” has within a few short years led to a campaign to remake entirely our customs, our habits, our attitudes, our values. As Maggio is well aware, language is central to that campaign; would that those committed to preserving the self-same customs, habits, attitudes, and values were as serious as she.

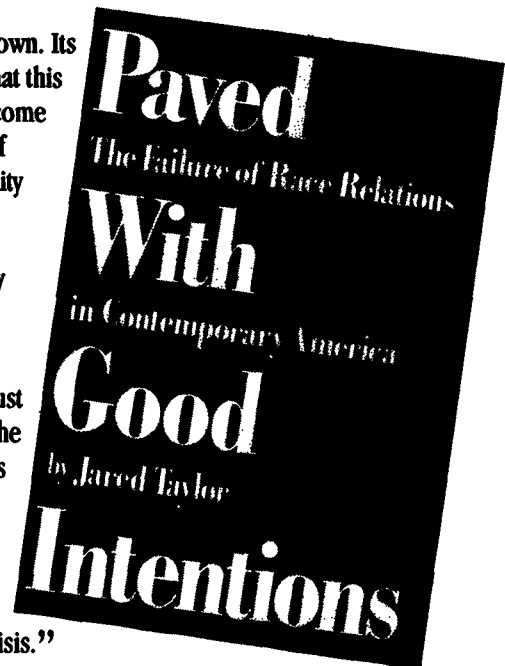
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## The Elephant in the Corner

A QUESTION OF INTELLIGENCE: THE IQ DEBATE IN AMERICA. By DANIEL SELIGMAN. *Birch Lane Press*. 192 pp. \$16.95.

Reviewed by CHARLES MURRAY

IN THE tight and sometimes nervous world of people who write about IQ, this book has been a topic of conversation for a long time. It was originally commissioned as one of the Whittle books, a series of short works popularizing a scholarly topic for wide readership, published with advertising, for which well-known authors (George Gilder, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *et al.*) are paid a flat fee. Daniel Seligman, a senior editor at *Fortune* and author of its popular column, "Keeping Up," had for twenty years been an avid lay student of the intelligence-testing controversy. The Whittle corporation asked him to write a book on IQ.

Seligman submitted the manuscript in 1990, and it proceeded uneventfully through the editing. Then, as the book reached page proofs, the word came down: thanks, it's a fine piece of work, you will get your fee—but the book will not be published. Seligman was left free to publish his book elsewhere, which he has now done in a new version that is about twice the length of the original.

Why the sudden cold feet? Whittle has never made an official statement, but there are more than enough choices. There are certain things about IQ that just are not said in polite company, and Seligman says all of them.

FOR a curious person, IQ has the same intellectual fascination that sex must have had in a bygone day, prompted in both instances by a sense that people are shying from the truth about a topic of fundamental importance to human life and society. In the case of IQ, the American intelligentsia, if you will pardon the expression, is currently

in a state of denial. There is, we are told, no such thing as a uni-dimensional "intelligence," and certainly IQ tests do not measure it. Everybody, we are assured, is intelligent, only in different ways—you kinesthetically, me verbally, the other fellow interpersonally.

But in everyday life, we *know* we use the words "smart" and "intelligent" regularly, and we know that these words have meaning. True, people can be smart in different ways, and to be smart does not necessarily mean to be sensible (witness the political history of American intellectuals in the 20th century), but most of us also sense a continuum of general cognitive ability that ranges from "low" to "high," and we know that many important tasks in life must be done by people with high intelligence. We know, for example, that we want the engineer who designs the plane we fly, or the pathologist who examines our biopsy tissue, to be a person with the analytic qualities that produce high IQ scores—and to hell with his interpersonal intelligence.

Yet all of these understandings, which seem to be nearly universal, are denied by the received wisdom. What makes this particular received wisdom especially laughable is that it is most piously catechized in the academy—than which there is no community where raw cognitive ability, of precisely the variety measured by IQ tests, is more highly prized, fretted over, and constantly compared against the next fellow's.

There is another twist to the received wisdom on intelligence. Like the received wisdom on other political topics, it has its origins in the intelligentsia and has a few highly visible proponents. (Howard Gardner of "multiple intelligences" and Stephen Jay Gould of *The Mismeasure of Man* are the most prominent.) But among specialists on mental testing, there is another consensus altogether. As Seligman points out, this other received wisdom is for the most part opposite to the one that gets into the media.

Consider the issue of "cultural bias" in IQ testing. In the media, it is taken for granted that mental

tests are culturally biased against blacks. In the technical journals, by contrast, it is now equally taken for granted—after an excruciatingly detailed investigation of the issue during the 1970's and early 1980's—that the tests are not culturally biased against blacks.

SELIGMAN tells the story of "cultural bias" as one among the smorgasbord of topics he dips into here. What is it like to take an IQ test? Seligman, at the age of sixty-four, submitted himself to the Wechsler battery of tests so that he could tell us. He also talks about the famous Minnesota monozygotic twin study, enlivening the statistical analysis with anecdotes about some of the bizarre similarities the study has uncovered between twins raised apart. There are the two Jims, for example, who both married first wives named Linda, married second wives named Betty, had been sheriff's deputies, vacationed in the same Florida beach resort, liked the same brands of beer and cigarettes, were avid woodworkers, and—bizarre indeed—had each built a circumamboreal bench around a tree in his yard.

Then there is the Terman study, in which 1,528 highly gifted children born around 1910 were identified in their grade-school years and followed literally through life. There is the strange, still incompletely understood phenomenon of a secular, worldwide increase in IQ scores throughout the century. Is the human species getting smarter? Probably not, reports Seligman, but the lower half of the distribution may be getting less dumb.

And there is the Cyril Burt case. Burt, one of the giants of psychology, died in 1971 at the age of eighty-eight, most famous for his own twin studies establishing the role of genes in transmitting IQ. A few years after his death, he was exposed—or so it was accepted at the time—as a charlatan who had made up much of his data. Seligman takes the account through the most recent development, the publication in 1989 and 1991 of two books on the Burt scandal, researched and written independently. Both conclude that Burt, while a bit dotty in his last years,

CHARLES MURRAY is working on a book about IQ and public policy in collaboration with Richard J. Herrnstein.

was essentially a victim of character assassination by leftist intellectuals intent on discrediting the idea that intelligence is heritable.

A poignant afterword to the Burt story is that the ongoing Minnesota twin study, accepted everywhere as a model of its kind, recently published its most refined estimate of the correlation of IQ between monozygotic twins reared apart. It is  $+0.78$ , on a  $-1$  to  $+1$  scale. And what was Burt's "adjusted-score" correlation between monozygotic twins reared apart, savagely derided for the last fifteen years as fraudulent? It was  $+0.77$ .

It is this kind of story that must make IQ researchers everywhere worry about the vulnerability of their own reputations to ideological smear campaigns. Of such researchers, none has exposed himself more frequently and fearlessly than Arthur Jensen, who first achieved notoriety in 1969 when he published an article in the *Harvard Educational Review* concluding that remedial education was bound to have limited results because the population of children to which it was directed, dispropor-

tionately black, had limited intelligence. Seligman tells this story, too, and in the process arrives at the topic that surely made the Whittle people more nervous than any other: race.

There is not much that can be said accurately in a few sentences about race differences in intelligence, and I will not try here. Seligman does an excellent job of laying out the essentials of the story with enough technical detail to be fair to the complexity, hedging where appropriate and refusing to hedge on issues where the data are clear, managing to convey that the sky is not falling without avoiding some troubling realities. If you want to know the state of knowledge about race and ethnic differences in intelligence, *A Question of Intelligence* is a fine place to begin.

THIS is, in fact, a wholly absorbing book, written in the brisk and colloquial style that Seligman uses to such good effect in his *Fortune* column. And the book is accessible without being facile. Seligman may not be a psychometrician, but he

has read widely and understands the statistics. As he states at the outset, he is not trying to break new ground, but to represent as accurately as he can what seems to be the contemporary consensus among the experts. He has done so admirably. *A Question of Intelligence* is an entertaining, honest book on an enormously complicated topic.

My one quarrel is with his concluding chapter, where Seligman defends the value of testing. There is nothing objectionable in his individual conclusions, but he tries to do more here than his self-imposed constraints permit. In the preceding chapters he has put before the reader an episodic story that, taken as a whole, has labyrinthine ramifications for our culture and our polity. Seligman has not worked through what it all means—nor has anybody else—and he would have been better off saying that straight out. The great merit of his book is to acknowledge that there is an elephant sitting in the corner, which we have been trying to ignore for 30 years now.

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